

FOR ODIN, THOR, ASGARD



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For Odin, for Thor, for Asgard!

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The Cosmic Ultimatum

The Skies over Asgard

Normally the weapons of Asgard and those who wield them are more than enough to halt any attack on the City. Usually only fools and the allies of fools (therefore fools themselves) would countenance such an attack.

Today is different.

The Celestial One Above All delivered the ultimatum to Odin on behalf of the great cosmic powers of the Multiverse.

Galactus, the Stranger, The Inbetweenner, Kronos, Uuaatu and others of his fellow Watchers and five more Celestials, Arishhem the Judge, Gammenon the Gatherer, Oneg the Prober, Eson the Searcher and Exitar the Exterminator were among those present. Abstract entities including Mistress Death herself, Master Order and Lord Chaos, Mistress Love and Master Hate also stood witness. Great Eternity and Infinity were also present though they were at some distance. Perhaps they were not entirely comfortable with the course of action being taken by their fellow titans.

Odin stood stony faced but unbowed. With him the skyfathers of all of the god pantheons associated with the Earth and not a few other Skyfathers, leaders of extra-dimensional pantheons closely allied to Asgard. At Odin's shoulder stood the blood of the blood, the greatest warrior god ever to have drawn breath, the mighty Thor.

In the skies above Asgard mighty storm gathered momentum, urged on involuntary by the anger of the son of Odin. Everyone present on this day, god and cosmic power

alike, knew this was no ordinary storm but a harbinger of what was to come.

Odin, Thor and all of the skyfathers present had mystically grown to Celestial size. A sure sign they were in mood to be intimidated. Elsewhere these events were being witnessed by almost all the god pantheons of the Multiverse and almost all of the cosmic powers. Including the home worlds of the Celestial and Watcher races. Privately more than half of the pantheons of the Multiverse had said they would join the Earth pantheons in battle. Others spoke of the need for caution. Aren't there always such entities? Continuing to advise caution even when all about them is in flame and ruin?

Back behind Asgard City, and deep into the sub continent, yet towering over all, was Odin's Destroyer construct. Now empowered by much of the god power of all the pantheons of the Earth save only the Skyfathers, Death Gods, and a few others. The behemoth, larger than an Exitar class Celestial, looked on. A signal from Odin was all that it needed. It was unstated, yet understood, that many of the Multiverse pantheons would contribute god energies to it. Odin only had to ask.

Elsewhere among the city's fortification was the Odin Canon manned by those of Asgard best equipped to do so. A weapon only every fired once in anger. Before the mighty Thor was even born.

The Elder Gods of the Earth including Gaea, birth mother of the mighty Thor, were not subject to the cosmic decree yet they stood in support of the pantheon gods. Silently witnessing events. With them not a few Elder gods from other dimensions.

All in all the most watched event by the great powers in all of Multiversal history.

Presumably, from somewhere, the Living Tribunal himself watched on. Yet that entity had not sought to mediate, or, worse, take sides in the coming conflict.

The demands of the cosmic powers were intolerable. All of the earth's pantheon gods without exception were to cease any form of association with the Earth. They were to play no future part in the destiny of man. To ensure this the pantheons were to depart without any exception and without delay to a distant extra-dimensional location assigned to them. Does not human history itself contain a myriad of such treatments of supposedly lesser groups?

Allfather Odin saw it for what it was. The Celestials had succeeded in influencing the other great cosmic powers to lean to their own particular way of thinking. Odin could feel the anger welling within him. He sensed the hate emanating from the abstract entity Master Hate. The Lord of Asgard controlled himself though controlling his Axe was proving more difficult.

The Celestial TOAA conjured up a vision as to the consequences of the gods not complying with the cosmic ultimatum. It showed Asgard and Olympus and indeed all of the homes of the pantheon gods associated with Earth burned to less than cinders.

Further it showed the Earth, all life upon it expunged, hurtling through space at frightening speed towards the welcoming arms of an unknown alien sun.

Fuelled by Master Hate's manipulations the mighty OdinAxe was urging its master to immediate conflict. Suddenly the

sentient weapon conjured up an image in Odin's minds eye. In it Odin had used the axe to decapitate the Celestial TOAA and also slashed a vicious deep cut in the entities chest cavity. Celestial energies were poring forth unrestrained from these areas and the mystical power of the OdinAxe prevented the Celestial from regenerating its damaged armour.

Mere fanciful imaginings on the part of the sentient OdinAxe? Mayhap, yet the Lord of Asgard allowed the Celestials to read this in his mind and he saw they were discomfited by it. "If the OdinAxe troubles them, how much more will they be troubled by the lost weapons of Asgard?" thought Odin but he shielded these particular thoughts very carefully.

The Celestial TOAA with typical rigidity indicated by hand signs that there was no scope for negotiation. This was simply how it was to be. Odin's response was quietly restrained yet eloquent. Eternity looked aside, clearly embarrassed. If wisdom and eloquent reasoned argument meant anything then the battle was already over. Since it didn't, Odin finished with the clearest possible indication that the gods would not move. Enigmatically he cautioned against opening a "Pandora's box" of unrestrained god power.

As the great cosmic powers temporarily retired from Asgard, Odin pulled Thor and Zeus aside. "We must expect an imminent attack" said the Allfather. Without time for a detailed explanation Odin with a mere gesture placed in the minds of Thor and Zeus the knowledge of a great event that had been kept from them for untold millennia.

Back in a time when even Odin himself was yet young and new to the throne of Asgard a long hard war was fought with

an enemy too fearful, too terrifying to contemplate. When victory was achieved only by the narrowest of margins Odin removed all knowledge of the conflict from every living being save himself and the Living Tribunal. This was so men and those who were more than men could sleep at night and the Multiverse could again become a quieter, gentler place.

Both great Odin and the Tribunal thought that the weapons used at this time would never again be needed. That they were simply too powerful to be left anywhere that lesser beings could acquire them. As such these "lost weapons of Asgard" were placed beyond the access of all save Odin and the Living Tribunal.

"My son" said Odin "We are ranged against all the cosmic powers of the Multiverse and have uncertain support from many of the Multiverse pantheons". "Unthinkably we must again retrieve some of these ancient weapons; great mjolnir will show you the way." "With the cosmic powers attack imminent all skyfathers must remain here."

"Which weapons shall I return with father" enquired the Mighty Thor.

"You will know my son" was Odin's only reply "you will know."

Even before the mighty Thor could return the conflict began.

The gods drew first blood. Almost exactly the same as in the image the OdinAxe had conveyed to Odin's mind's eye. By the very mightiest of swings with the fabled OdinAxe Odin decapitated the Celestial TOAA. As in the image the

mystical forces at play seemed to prevent the Celestial from regenerating its armour. The energies of the most exalted Celestial of all were spewing everywhere. The OdinAxe held firmly in Odin's hand seemed to be glowing brighter than a million suns.

Then in a move that caught the cosmic powers completely by surprise Odin removed his long standing custodianship of the delicate balance between Order and Chaos. Instantly Master Order and Lord Chaos were at each others throats and the Multiverse entire was plunged into a conflict between order and chaos that could only spiral out of control unless another were to take up that custodianship.

Then with the Celestial TOAA still writhing prostrate before Odin, all restraint and all caution was thrown to the cosmic winds as gods and cosmic entities flew at each other.

Galactus and Zeus locked together in a death embrace from which only one would survive. Eye energy beams blasting in to each others faces. Inconceivable energies dancing and coruscating about the entire lengths of their huge forms. Both titans savagely ripped at each others throats, hands and fingers alive with either Olympian energies or the power cosmic. Indeed the Olympian and cosmic energies intermingled to the point they were inseparable. Each of the true titans sought to free an arm, to deliver a blow powerful enough that it might also deliver death.

A phalanx of pantheon death gods, not just those such as Hela and Pluto associated with the Earth plane, but others among the Multiverse pantheons struck in a wedge shaped formation at the ultimate of all death entities, Mistress Death herself. Perhaps this was no more than a vainglorious attack but it would serve at least to occupy Death for a while.

Leading the charge for the elder gods the Demogorge sought to rip out the throat of the enigmatic stranger while the All Pantheon Destroyer construct raised its disintegration visor and unleashed that awesome weapon on Exitar of the Celestials.

Deeply worried about Asgard, the All Father had placed the "Shield of Odin" about it. The Shield had grown to city size and would offer temporary protection at best. Until the mighty Thor returned with something more enduring.

Odin confronted by Arishhem the Celestial suddenly found himself plummeting not only through layers of time but layers of time in different dimensions. No doubt primarily the work of Kronos but the dimensional subtleties suggested the hand of another. It was a clever tactic containing only one significant flaw. It was used against Odin the Almighty, Lord of all Asgard and wielder of the Odinfence.

Returning to the now moment in our Universe Odin ensured that Kronos was suitably "rewarded". The supposed master of time was himself placed in a one day long repetitive time constraint block. His own personal "ground hog day" if you will. In a 24 Earth hour repetitive cycle Kronos was the helpless witness to the final 24 hours in the infamous fuhrerbunker of Earth's greatest Dictator Adolf Hitler before he took his own life. Odin chuckled, if the battle against the cosmos went on long enough Kronos might even go mad. There seemed a strange irony in this.

But Arishhem the Judge awaited Odin. Like Galactus, Arishhem also opted for the savage physical approach. Odin was slightly bemused by this. The Celestials were if anything somewhat slow, cumbersome and unskilled in purely physical battle. While Odin was undeniably one of the great

warrior gods of all time. As he had mystically grown to Celestial size Odin was only too happy to accommodate the Celestial in physical battle. As Odin reigned blow after blow upon Arishem the hatred grew within him. Who were these meddling genetic manipulators, these self styled space gods to demand that the true gods themselves be rounded up like cattle and put to pasture? Increasingly Arishem was unable to return Odin's blows but the Allfather was past caring.

Elsewhere and perhaps even elsewhen the mighty Thor marvelled at the contents of the “Lost weapons of Asgard repository” every bit as much as he marvelled at their location.

Odin and the Living Tribunal had almost hidden the repository in plain sight.

It was located in one of the realities contained in the All Place itself, a place where all of the realities converge as if they were merely different streets in a large city. Yet this particular reality was accessible only to great Odin and the Living Tribunal and now the mighty Thor. Thor wondered whether the present custodians of the All Place, the galactic superpower empire of the Tolden knew of the repository. This seemed unlikely. If Odin and the Living Tribunal together did not wish it, then it was not so.

Thor marvelled at his father’s accomplishments in gathering all these weapons together.

He now knew that as a young skyfather, Odin had embarked on a cosmic quest. To locate the main extra-dimensional pantheons, to begin “mapping” their locations on the great

map of the gods, and to gather in any great artefacts upon the way. A quest that had paid dividends in times past and would now do so again.

Of the various artefacts before him one item seemed to call to him much as mighty mjolnir might do. He knew it from the description Odin had implanted in his mind.

It was “the armour of the son to be” – not Thor as Odin’s son but Magni, his own son not yet born. Magni who as wearer of this armour would take mighty Asgard to even greater heights. So Thor believed, and so he had once seen when viewing the distant future from the high place at Hlidskialf.

Even the battle armour of Odin himself could not begin to match this armour. Its pedigree was beyond all question.

It was originally the armour of Tragathh the last soldier of the Brell a race that millions of years ago strode the stars and the dimensions as easily as men might walk to the house next door. In a great intertemporal journey of millions of years Tragathh had sought out and destroyed the entity that had destroyed his own race.

Then, living, all too briefly among the gods of Asgard Tragathh passed on content bequeathing his armour to a youthful Odin. Legend had it that the armour contained all of the residual power of the Brell. Yet not content with this Odin had added his own enchantments and those of the other Earth skyfathers and in the end enchantments from most of the extra-dimensional god pantheons that he visited on his great quest.

The mighty Thor took with him just two other artefacts. They did not glow or entreat him to take them but he knew just the same that these were what were needed. Just as Almighty Odin had said.

As the struggle between pantheon gods and cosmic powers continued the palpable hatred, grew ever greater fuelling the conflict. This was something far more than merely Master Hate's manipulations. All engaged in the battle felt it to a lesser or greater degree. It allowed of no scope for conciliation or reason. Even the normally docile Watchers fought with indescribable savagery. Odin had not known the like since the unthinkable, unmentionable war long ago. As if those who had then threatened all of existence had somehow been able to pass on their hatred many millennia later.

Though the Odin Cannon had never been used during their life times, Heimdall, Hermod, and Hogun the Grim had all been well trained in its use. Heimdall offering a physical sensory capability far beyond the most advanced imaginable computer targeting systems and Hermod offered a frightening speed of operation. Hogun offered sheer determination and the preparedness to take massive loss of life if necessary.

Rumour had it that when last used, on a distant battlefield, the Cannon had shattered a Galaxy and even its recoil alone had pulverized a star system. They would need to be careful with it.

Soon the first of the main body of Celestials and the race of Watchers began to teleport in to the battle. At about the same time more of the Multiverse's other pantheon gods' skyfathers, war gods, gods of thunder and death gods also began teleporting in. On both sides some never made it. Both the Celestials and certain of the Multiverse pantheon

gods had the power to intercept and destroy entities while in the act of teleportation. An act also well within the present capabilities of the Odin Cannon.

Those Celestials and Watchers that reached the field of battle came under immediate fire from the Heimdall/Hermod/Hogun controlled Odin Cannon. A Cannon that can destroy Galaxies can with a few adjustments be calibrated to destroy a Celestial or a Watcher.

Apart from Eternities subtle assistance to Kronos, Eternity and Infinity had played a by-stander role but as more and more of their fellows fell before the gods their own high level intervention was becoming increasingly necessary. Eternity took the first step to full scale involvement in taking over custodianship of the balance between Chaos and Order relinquished by Odin. "Steadying the ship" for the cosmic powers.

In the midst of it all the Mighty Thor returned bearing arms. Standing resplendent in the "armour of the son to be" the mighty Thor raised mjolnir high above his head and called upon the greatest cosmic storm that had ever been summoned or that ever will be summoned. Using his own god essence combined not only with the hammer supreme but also the armour supreme Thor fed the storm still further. It seemed to momentarily sweep away the other energies, cosmic, Celestial, Asgardian, Elder God, and other god pantheon and for the briefest of moments even the Odinfence itself seemed to defer to the mighty Thor's godstorm.

Almost every pantheon has its Thunder God, yet as every

Skyfather and every great cosmic power knows there is only one true god of Thunder.

If you had taken a thousand thunder gods from the many pantheons of the Multiverse they could never have come anywhere near creating a storm such as this. The madness the total insanity that had prevailed seemed to clear from the battlefield and for a moment from the minds of all.

The son of Odin cried out "enow, I say enow, can you all not see the savage madness that doth abound here! Let the battle cease now, let reason prevail!" It was a cry to reason that could be heard throughout the length and breadth of the Multiverse.

All warring factions, gods and cosmic powers alike, momentarily ceased their fighting and looked to the Mighty Thor for guidance. Thor had accomplished something that the Living Tribunal himself had been either unwilling or unable to do. The temporary cessation of hostilities.

There are times, crucial watershed moments in the lives and histories of men, gods, and cosmic entities alike where the path taken may lead upwards to the light or downwards to ever spiralling decay. This was such a moment. The ultimate watershed moment in the whole history of the Multiverse. Save perhaps only, times beginning and its end.

Yet even as he started to call out further to them, the warring factions, even All Father Odin, looked away from him, and recommenced battle.

Thor saw the moment had past and been lost.

He saw too that an overcrowded battle that had thus far been largely contained to the general vicinity of the

Asgardian dimension would now likely spread unconstrained to all of the four corners of the Multiverse.

For a moment the mighty Thor despaired. He saw the future more clearly than he ever had at Hlidskialf and it was cause for that despair. The dreams of his son Magni carrying Asgard on to even greater heights occupied no place in this future most grim.

Then the son of Odin, the last sane great power of the Multiverse, was himself afflicted by the mad hatred and launched himself into battle.

Elsewhere the Living Tribunal had already succumbed to the mad hate and had decided on which side to enter the conflict.

His decision did not favour the gods.

Some years later

The Exitar class Celestial, Leandarr, the last of his race, moved swiftly through the star systems in his path. It was the first time the Celestial behemoth had returned to this part of the Multiverse since the great Multiverse War that had almost destroyed all life.

He missed his own kind and the group Over mind through which all Celestial minds could mingle and communicate. The anger that he had once felt towards the destroyers of that Over mind, the Asgardian gods Odin and Thor, was long gone. Just as the anger, the pure unadulterated hatred, which had infected all of the gods and cosmic powers and indeed all life, had long since run its course.

Some of the star systems that Leandarr was now moving through had once held life. But no longer. Without exception their suns were drained husks and the shattered planets no more than asteroid belts of debris that had eventually found equilibrium of sorts orbiting the dead suns. Leandarr reflected that the Multiverse was a colder place now. In every sense of the word.

The leviathan came across several star system size, jagged, diamond like structures, in the depths of interstellar space. Whole Universes seemed to be compressed into these fragmentary structures. These were the remnants of some of the realities that had not survived the conflict. A direct consequence of The Living Tribunal's decision, at the height of his madness, to destroy the All Place.

Leandarr recalled that even the Living Tribunal had been suffused with the mad hatred. The Tribunal had entered the conflict on the side of the cosmic powers and directed the battle against the gods. On occasion, greatly empowering some cosmic entities, such as the Silver Surfer, for specific tasks.

Ultimately it had been the Living Tribunal that had ordered the unthinkable. The attack on the All Place where all of the realities converge. He had sent Thanos, Tyrant, Abraxas, and all of the former heralds of Galactus, except the destroyer construct, resurrecting some and including a vastly empowered Silver Surfer. The gods had been too slow to react and the All Place custodians, the super power empire of the Tolden, had not been up to the task.

Were it not for an artefact that the mighty Thor had secured from the “Lost Weapons of Asgard” repository even our own reality, the Central reality, might have collapsed and gone the way of all others.

There had been no victors in a war that had inevitably drawn in the other mystical/magical powers of the Multiverse (mainly on the side of the gods) and also the more technologically advanced races.

The privilege of survivorship was shared equally between but a handful of the warring factions.

Leandarr knew though that among the lesser survivors, the mortals, human and otherwise, it was the cosmic powers that were blamed for the war. That at night, the mortals, thinly spread through the Galaxies, comforted themselves with tales of the strength, the power, the heroism, the nobility, and the courage of the gods. None more so than All Father Odin of Asgard and his blood son the mighty Thor.

Finally the hulking Exitar class Celestial reached his destination.

A place that had been the Earth, Asgard, Olympus axis. It was here where the war had begun and ultimately here where it had ended. Though the battle had extended to all corners of the Multiverse the conflict was never fiercer than in this very place.

It was quiet now in every sense of the word. The Earth's sun had burned cold, the inconceivably powerful energies that had been unleashed here had finally largely dissipated and the telepathic death screams of souls in torment, of life forces extinguished, had ceased.

The Celestial looked about. For all that had taken place here there was comparatively little evidence of the conflict in terms of weaponry debris. As if an unseen cosmic hand had largely swept the area clean. Briefly Leandarr thought of he who is above us all, if indeed that entity still existed.

Leandarr noticed a fragment of the hilt of Twilight, the sword of Surtur, among the debris. In the end the great sword had proved even more durable than the Odinsword itself. After the destruction of the Odinsword, Surtur in his death throes had willingly thrown the sword Twilight into Odin's grasp.

Asgard's Lord had made good use of it.

Also among the debris, tiny shards of the great shield of Odin. The shield had first been used to protect Asgard and after Thor had returned from the "Lost Weapons of Asgard" repository with an even more enduring defence the shield had been used to help protect the Earth.

This had puzzled the cosmic powers at the time. The Odin Shield they understood but when Odin transferred it to protect the Earth, the planetoid/continent that is Asgard itself should have been incinerated many times over as collateral damage. Only after the war did the full truth emerge.

As the land mass of Asgard was being almost constantly disintegrated so the artefact taken by Thor from the repository was constantly renewing, nano second by nano second, the molecular, indeed the very atomic structure of

the land of Asgard. In this it was greatly assisted by the many and various mystical artefacts that abound in greater Asgard. And all, ultimately, was underwritten by the power of Odin and Thor.

Elsewhere Leandarr noticed little more than a few slivers of the great Odin Cannon. Leandarr shrugged. The rumours that the Cannon had the power to destroy Galaxies were more than rumours. Ably manned by those best equipped to do so, and protected by an in depth defence of pantheon war gods about it, the Cannon had taken its toll of the cosmic powers. Guided by the Odin reinforced senses of Heimdall the Canon had proved as accurate against a target the other side of the Galaxy as it was against a target at close range. Forcing the Living Tribunal to vastly empower the Silver Surfer into the ultimate stealth form.

Evading all of the protections about the Cannon, the Surfer, travelling as fast as thought and with simultaneous enhanced bolts of the power cosmic, laid low Heimdall, Hermod, and Hogun the Grim. More, though not destroying it, the Surfer rendered the Odin Cannon non operational. It would not be used in the conflict again. For this deed the silver one paid with his life as he was struck down attempting to flee by a sickening blow from a mighty mjolnir that absorbed all of the excess empowerment provided by the Living Tribunal. Leaving the Silver Surfer vulnerable to the angry attentions of the war gods he had evaded.

Perhaps somewhat after the fashion of a shot down Earth bomber pilot surrounded by angry civilians whom he has just bombed.

Leandarr remembered great Eternity doing what the Living Tribunal had been reluctant to do and engaging Almighty Odin himself, one on one. The cosmic powers knew that an essential ingredient to victory was to divest the All Father of the much feared OdinAxe. Eternity succeeded in loosening Odin's grip on the Axe such that the Axe flew free but at what a cost! Burning brighter than a million suns the Axe

disappeared into the depths of Eternity. It never returned but the damage done became clear. Further as the very embodiment of our Universe, Eternity suffered and declined as the Universe suffered and declined.

One direct consequence of this was that Eternity could no longer maintain the balance between Order and Chaos that Odin had earlier deliberately relinquished.

Leandarr the Celestial remembered also how the cosmic powers lost two of their most potent entities through no action of the gods. Master Hate had sought to absorb the hatred that had suffused all living things. A task beyond him just as Mistress Love was overwhelmed by it. The two abstract entities ended up destroying each other.

Then the Celestial noticed another artefact among the debris. One that gave him pause as no other had. Impossibly, inconceivably, the hammer of Thor had survived the conflict. Blackened and pitted, cracked and scarred, it was nonetheless essentially whole. The Colossus was startled, an involuntarily reaction. Even now the great hammer evoked fear in him as it no doubt would for any and all of the very few surviving cosmic powers.

Whatever hand had attempted to sweep this area clean, it could not sweep away the memories. This place was full of them, full of the ghosts of the past. They continued flooding back to Leandarr.

The Celestial behemoth visualised again Odin's monstrous Destroyer construct almost bloated with the life forces not only of Earth pantheons but of other distant pantheons. It was surrounded by a veritable host of Celestials and Watchers and other cosmic entities milling around it, seeking to lay it low. Which, eventually, they did. Though not before it took a heavy toll of the cosmics including the

incineration of mighty Exitar under its lethal disintegration beam.

Looking in another direction Leandarr recalled the awe inspiring memory of an astral gathering of the sorcerers supreme of many of the Multiverse's dimensions and the spell that brought forth heroes of the past, gods, other mystical/magical entities, and yet other heroes and champions. A spell that somewhat backfired, as it also brought forth cosmic powers of the past. Thus serving, in the end, too only enlarge the conflict still further by introducing an intertemporal component. Just one of the entities brought forth by this spell was the Demi-Urge, according to some, the creator of life on Earth. Those same energies of creation were used by the Demi-Urge in mighty defence of the Earth/Asgard/Olympus axis.

No memory though was more etched in Leandarr's Celestial consciousness than the god blasts of the son of Odin.

Towards the end the gods were on the defensive, yet sustained god blasts from Thor, Odin, Vishnu and all of the sky fathers present had held the unrelenting cosmics at bay. Until eventually the Living Tribunal himself had come to break the deadlock.

None of the cosmic entities had understood how Thor, in particular, had been able to sustain god blast after god blast. All conventional wisdom was that the process of just one god blast should leave him totally exhausted. Unable to launch a further assault until considerable time had passed. Yet it patently was not so. Was it the residual power of the Brell in the "armour of the son to be" that had reinforced him, or were the depths of power, of strength, of determination, of the son of Odin, ultimately beyond anything the great cosmic powers had envisaged. Now the answer would never be known.

After the death of Odin, the god blasts of Thor even seemed to increase still further in sheer destructive power. For as long as he might live Leandarr would never forget the last

god blast of the son of Odin. A god full of pure anger and fury beyond all imagining – righteous wrath producing strength and power greater than any mere warrior’s madness ever could have done.

After this the whole of the Earth/Asgard/Olympus axis was a seething raging mass of leashed Asgardian energy.

The Living Tribunal pronounced that the life force of the mighty Thor had himself been consumed in the god blast.

That the son of Odin had used the resources of his own body in this final act.

Exhausted beyond all belief a shattered Living Tribunal and a very few surviving cosmic companions left the Earth/Asgard/Olympus axis. Of those few, it was only Leandarr that would return.

Leandarr looked over the battlefield again. This time more intently, more minutely. Determined to miss nothing of importance.

Incredibly he had missed something on his first scan of the area, or had its presence been withheld from him?

Somehow cocooned within a very small asteroid was the “armour of the son to be” and within that armours protective embrace lay the son of Odin himself. Not at all dead but merely asleep and now moving to wakeful consciousness.

Then Leandarr sensed elsewhere on the Earth/Asgard/Olympus axis the elements of a great power reforming. At first he could not perceive its true nature. Yet as he continued to watch and wait, it became clear to him. There was intense activity amidst the debris in what had formerly been Earth’s orbit about the sun. Something swirling amidst the debris with more than merely random purpose.

The Odinpower was reforming and coalescing with it and reforming with it were some of the energies of other pantheon and elder gods that had perished here. Most notably the power of the Demiurge.

Leandarr, last surviving Celestial, came finally to realise that which any Asgardian school child of the past could have told him. That the OdinPower can never be truly destroyed. That it is and always was a force for good and for creation complementary to the original forces of creation.

The mighty Thor now fully returned to consciousness took stock of events gathering in elements of that which was now something slightly more than the OdinPower.

Leandarr continued to look on as the mighty Thor, utilising the more than OdinPower began to recreate the Earth/Asgard/Olympus axis including all of the Sol star system including the sun. Then just as the Demi-Urge had seeded life on Earth and created the elder gods long ago, so the mighty Thor seeded the Earth with life anew.

Leander watched on and did not interfere in this process. Though briefly he thought of doing so, he knew intuitively that he lacked the power. Rather if it were possible for a great Celestial to experience a sense of wonder then Leandarr experienced this as he witnessed the events of the Earth's recreation.

Eventually the massive Celestial turned and moved away. He did not look back. Legend has it that at that moment a huge image of All father Odin appeared briefly near the Earth totally dwarfing the Celestial. That Odin and Thor watched the Celestial's departure together.

All of the few remaining great powers knew immediately of the act of recreation.

The certain knowledge that the mighty Thor was not dead and that the OdinPower, indeed something even more than the OdinPower had survived.

Here in this new greater OdinForce, this Odin/Demi-Urge power, the mighty Thor had an instrument for creation

second only to the original creator at times aborning. The mighty Thor would move on utilising the Odin/Demi-Urge power for other acts of recreation. In turn the remaining cosmic, god pantheon and other mystic great powers, through Thor, had found the will that had been lacking. To make a small start in the reconstitution and recreation of other small areas of our Universe.

At night in the recreated Asgard, the mighty Thor looked out among the stars. There were far fewer of them now than before. His mind turned to the dreams he had while he slept cocooned in the armour of the son to be. They were dreams of Magni. Magni that would one day wear that armour and would take Asgard onward and upwards to even greater heights.

The mighty Thor, son of Odin, saw that this could still be. That there was still reason to dream.

End

Postscript

In an attempt not to repeat the mistakes of the past all sentient beings were advised of the reasons for and factors behind the Multiverse war.

Every sentient entity knew of the reasons for the hatred that had suffused all. In the unmentionable conflict that many millennia before had preceded the Multiverse War, Almighty Odin and the Living Tribunal had triumphed but they had removed all knowledge of that event from every mind except their own.

A decision that proved to be a mistake of unparalleled proportions in all of the history of the Multiverse. If as a community the gods and the cosmic powers, and indeed other mystical/magical entities had been aware of this earlier war they could at least have been on their guard against the hatred that had consumed them all.

The unmentionable, the unthinkable enemy of that time, had indeed been defeated. At least their physical bodies, their energy forms, their essential life forces had been first driven outside of the Multiverse and then destroyed. Yet somehow impossibly the hatred, long adrift in the ethereal sea beyond the Multiverse, had survived and even flourished. Eventually seeping back into our Multiverse with the cataclysmic results that all survivors of the Multiverse war now knew. It called into question who had actually won that earlier war.

End

Against the Celestials

The Australian Outback

(near Katherine in the Northern Territory)

The old yet very powerfully built man shambled along among the elders of the tribe. He had come to them out of the bush with no memories of his past existence.

The big man was welcomed by the tribe and its elders. He brought a wisdom and stability that they had lacked. While he stayed with them good fortune attended them and game and water were in plentiful supply. For some unknown reason no member of the tribe died during this time.

“He will not be with us forever” whispered Gillpilli, one of the elders, “for there is a quiet greatness about him.”

“Eventually he will remember about himself and he will return to his former greatness.”

Fabled Asgard

“My father has been gone so long now” said Thor reluctant Lord of Asgard “that I despair we shall ever see him again.” “He is not dead” continued Thor “else I would sense that, but even with the aid of seers I am unable to detect him – it is as if the vastness of the OdinPower has been dampened to the point of not being detectable”.

The Australian Outback

(Ularuu or Ayers Rock as some still call it)

Why the space god Celestial host chose to make their base on Earth close to the monolithic landmark of Ularuu was unclear. Suffice to say that their sudden and unexplained arrival did nothing for the local tourist trade.

In short order the Celestials removed all evidence of human existence from the vicinity of the monolith and set up a base camp surrounded by a seemingly impenetrable barrier. They then seemed to lapse into slow motion – either not moving at all or moving slowly and ponderously about the camp with an indiscernible purpose.

A variety of Earth's heroes visited the Celestial site – among them he who was known only as The Sentry. The heroes sought to make contact with the Celestials but were totally ignored. Some heroes sought to breach the Celestial barrier. Despite his best efforts even the mighty Sentry was unable to breach the barrier though it glowed into incandescence under his unrelenting assault.

In time and as the Celestials made no incursion beyond their base the heroes eventually lost interest and went about their business. News of the arrival of the giant and enigmatic space gods eventually reached an Asgard that did not unduly concern itself with the affairs of Earth. Having observed the Celestials for a time Lord Thor decided it was at last time to ascertain their purpose in being on Earth. It was around this time that the individual known only as Olin among an Australian indigenous tribe started to become disturbed. Small recollections of past events came to him and he began to sense the existence of immense power not too distant from him. He also sensed something else – a son – he had a son and he was coming.

With Thors initial attempts to communicate with the Celestials (audio-visual images from Asgard) being totally

ignored, he teleported interdimensionally direct to Ularuu. Lord Thor then hailed the Celestial host on both the verbal then telepathic level – and was totally ignored. He could not even detect mild interest. Somewhat incensed by their apparent rudeness he determined that they would notice his presence. Initially Thor struck the barrier with bolts of anti-force that to his surprise had no discernible effect. Without pause and absorbing not inconsiderable amounts of the Earths electromagnetic energy into his hammer Thor struck again and again his attack had no discernable effect. Thor decided to raise his attack to another order of magnitude and allowing his hammer to become one with himself Thor struck out again in a restrained god blast against the barrier. But is this not an oxymoron? Can any god blast from one as powerful as Thor ever be restrained? Facing this godly assault a portion of the Celestial barrier faltered then failed but since the godblast once released cannot easily be recalled it flowed on lashing wildly into the Celestial encampment.

Where the Sentry had failed, the son of Odin had succeeded and the Celestial barrier though not totally destroyed was assuredly breached.

As his son continued to confront the Celestials the entity known among Australian aboriginal elders only as Olin but better known among all who live as Odin of Asgard became still further disturbed and regained yet more of his lost memory.

Entering the Celestial encampment Thor Odinson was still unable to attract the attention of the Celestials. He saw that his godblast had struck against one of the giants and been extinguished there but not before the Celestial had sustained damage to his torso. Still in mere seconds the Celestial regenerated his damaged armour and person. Now quite angry at the Celestial's continuing refusal to even notice him Thor called upon the storm - the winds, the rain and immeasurable voltages of lightning to strike the

Celestial host. The power of the storm grew exponentially urged on by Thors increasing anger, with electrical energies coruscating around the bodies of each individual Celestial. It seemed as if Thor and his Mother had worked in unison in enhancing the power of the storm to the nth degree.

At that moment Arishhem leader of the Celestial host finally turned his head just slightly and struck Thor down with a bolt of Celestial energy that moved at the speed of thought. Only moments afterward a giant Odin with memory fully restored with his height mystically enhanced to some 5,000 feet entered the Celestial encampment dwarfing even the Celestials. He looked down at the prostrate form of his son and then looked down at Arishhem and the fearsome Odin Anger was upon him. However before Odin could react all those Celestials assembled struck him with bolts in unison that staggered the Colossus. Gathering himself Odin lifted his great hand and redirected all of the Celestial bolts back to their source only he amplified those energies manyfold. All the Celestials present, even mighty Arishhem crashed to the ground.

If a Celestial can register surprise, if such a thing is possible, then they did do so to the last individual. And if a Celestial can know fear, if such a thing is possible, then to the last individual they knew fear at this moment.

Slowly the mighty Thor rose from the ground struggling to recover from Arishhem's attack. Meanwhile Odin looked into the distance and saw Thors mother Gaea in human form looking on at the confrontation. With a booming voice that carried across the length and breadth of the Australian continent (an equal mixture of anger and relief that his son was alive) Odin grabbed Arishhem around the waist raising him high and hurling him skyward. The other Celestials and Odin then met head on apparently content to keep the confrontation purely physical for the moment. Super dense Asgardian flesh and bone protected by force shields smashed against Celestial armour. As the battle raged on

over this ancient and scarred land it seemed as if the entire Australian continent might sink below the oceans.

Arishhem was only temporarily inconvenienced at best as he soon teleported back to the fray.

To counter Odin's size advantage all Celestials present grew to Odin's height but as purely physical combatants the Celestials were found wanting. They were typically slow, and having regard to their specialised purposes (analysing, judging, collecting etc) quite unskilled in close combat. Odin on the other hand was the ultimate warrior with at least tens of thousands of years experience.

Gaea decided to assist Odin and as the titans continued to trade blows great mountains of earth fell upon the Celestials and vast chasms opened up about them as the Earth itself moved against them. To the space gods such action was totally ineffectual - not even an irritant. Gaea then reached out to the other elder gods especially her son Atum requesting their combined assistance. For only the second occasion since time's aborning the single entity that comprised the aggregation of the power of all elder gods living and dead was formed. Gaea alone could do nothing in this conflict but the aggregate entity most assuredly could. A shaken Thor having teleported from the scene of battle to Asgard returned swiftly with his soul and those of many other Asgardians powering a huge version of Asgard's greatest weapon the Destroyer armour. In one arm the Destroyer construct carried the Odinsword, and in the other the almighty Odin shield itself. The Destroyer passed the Odinsword to it's master, for in truth who else should wield it ?, but retained the shield.

Aware that the Earth would not survive any prolonged confrontation Odin "phased" all combatants including himself into the vacuous space between our own and the next closest dimension. To observers from Earth's dimension the combatants appeared only as barely visible wraith like apparitions that passed through solid objects.

Odin and the Thor/Asgard Destroyer then pressed the attack against the Celestials. Odin his entire body coruscating with inconceivably powerful energies wielded the sword as he might have wielded a smaller sword in his younger warrior days. Odin used the Odinsword to parry many Celestial energy blasts while also hacking away several Celestial limbs and body parts with grim purpose. Those Celestial energies that were not parried with the Odinsword lashed against Odin's personal protective shields.

The Thor/Asgard Destroyer construct also coruscating with vast energies from head to toe lifted it's great disintegrator visor and allowed enormous energies to build atop it. Those energies were unleashed and met Celestial energies head on. Two Celestials temporarily fell in the process. The Destroyer then moved among the Celestials using the great Odin Shield both to block Celestial blasts and blows and also using the edge of the shield as a devastating weapon (not unlike how Captain America might use his shield). The Destroyer also struck against the Celestials with many other types o energies - anti-matter particle beams, molecular disruption, etheric plasma and much more - though in the main these were ineffective.

The all elder god aggregate seemed content to stand off physically from the conflict but pour in immeasurable swathes of all types of mystic energy looking for some weakness in the Celestial defences. Some type of arcane or eldritch force to which the Celestials might prove vulnerable.

For their part the Celestial's seemed to focus the bulk of their attack on the Thor/Asgard Destroyer - while swathes of Celestial energies were deflected by the undamaged Odin shield other energies hit parts of the Destroyer and the constructs temperature rose close to melting point. Sensing the immediate danger and with energies yet to build again atop the disintegrator visor - Thor and the other gods within the Destroyer launched a thousand Asgardian gods godblast

directing the energies through the OdinSword itself that Odin had just passed to it. This gave even the Celestials some pause and as the godblast ran its course both sets of protagonists looked across at each other as it were time for communication.

Odin felt his mind pulled into the mental landscape of some sort of group Celestial mind. It was huge without limit and quite beyond anything he had ever experienced. "If they do not allow me to leave here I fear that I will not be able to escape this alien mindscape" thought Odin.

At that moment the Celestials chose to communicate with Odin and he listened most intently. In this alternate reality as in our own the Celestials are not given to undue verbiage when dealing with others. They are not greatly given to conversing verbally or even telepathically to lesser races which (in their view) is pretty much everyone. When communicating with those of other races they have been known to use hand signals and motions and also to create and use agents to act on their behalf in the communication process. This is not to say that they perceived Mighty Odin as any kind of underling (In this reality - this was the first time they had encountered Odin face to face). Quite the contrary - Odin had (on the battlefield) demonstrably shown himself to be an unexpectedly powerful opponent at least the equal of any single Celestial and therefore quite dangerous.

Rather than detail the communication exchange word for word - especially having regard to the unusual environment in which it took place - it is perhaps best to summarise its essence.

Odin asked, simply, why the Celestials had not responded to Thor's first then subsequent attempts at communication. It emerged that the Celestials were quite unaccustomed to have anyone question much less challenge their actions. However they did indicate the intent of their operation at Ularuu if only to demonstrate its peaceful nature.

Apparently there is a race of immensely powerful entities that travel the stars as individuals looking for arid and unoccupied worlds that they might make more habitable. A broader form of Terraforming if you will. Where an arid desert existed such a being might create a mighty river or an ocean. Where an atmosphere was barely breathable they might oxygenate it. When their business was done on a world the individual entity of that race would remain there simply taking a different form such as a mighty mountain range or a great ocean and watching over the planet. When the world eventually ceased to exist the entity would move on.

The Celestials saw this work as somewhat complementary to their own endeavours and wished to know more about these star spanning terra formers.

The monolithic Ularuu was seen by the Celestials as some kind of nexus point for the entities and a very good place from which to study them. By its very nature the study would be long term.

Odin indicated he had no objection to the Celestial presence on Earth for this purpose (of course he could not speak for mankind) and went so far as to apologise for his sons actions. Yet strangely enough Odin sensed that this was now not enough to satisfy the Celestials – that they had been disturbed by the vastness of the OdinPower.

Later the Celestials mentioned, simply stating facts that the outcome of the present conflict had never been in doubt because they could simply call up more of their own numbers – as many as necessary. Odin in an equally factual statement mentioned that he or Thor could call on any amount of the many thousands of god pantheons to whom Asgard were linked in the Multiverse. Possibly Thor was doing that as the communications progressed. Odin did not mention that some saw him as the unofficial head of all those pantheons.

As the communications had continued Odin sensed that all that needed to be communicated had been and that there was a lingering Celestial reluctance to release his mind from its present location. With that he began to grow his own mental presence within the intimidating Celestial mindscape and found that it did not seem so impossibly huge after all. Though he had never had occasion to use it Odin knew that his mind was capable of a mental equivalent to an Odin level physical godblast. Even that might not secure his escape from this most strange of environments but he looked about himself and wondered how much damage such action might cause. It was impossible in this environment to keep such thoughts from the Celestials nor did Odin even try.

At that moment the mind or at least a large part of the mind of the All Elder God aggregate joined Odin in the landscape.

"There have been developments" said the elder god aggregation. "With the length of time that your communications with the Celestials took Thor decided to summon other pantheons and the Celestial host have physically departed the Earth." "Perhaps you sensed it" continued the Elder God aggregation "but the Celestials moved your mind - the Odin mind first from a group mindscape emanating from the Celestials on Earth to a larger group mindscape emanating from the Celestials on their home world." "Now they have placed your mind - the Odin mind in some type of prison construct mindscape" "We can only surmise" said the Elder God aggregate "that the Celestials at some point in the communications decided you were too powerful."

"Then there is only one course of action open to us" said Odin. With that the Odin mind grew still larger and the mental equivalent of a physical Odin godblast was released. The Elder God aggregate mind followed suit as best it could and within mere moments the Celestial mindscape was rent asunder. For the merest of moments the Odin mind and the

Elder God Mind drifted taking in the sheer awesomeness of the Celestial homeworld – then they were gone returned to their physical bodies.

Readjusting to having his mind back in his physical body Odin looked about him and was somewhat humbled to see how many pantheons had sent representatives in response to Thors call. There were representatives of the illuminon (gods of light), the assurers (gods of faith and hope), the supremors (gods of power) and so many many others. Lost among the host were representatives of the Olympians and other Earth pantheons. The representatives were at skyfather or war god level – something not lost on Odin. Thor, the destroyer armour now discarded, moved alongside his father who had returned to normal size. “It is a most unfortunate result my son” said Odin as he reflected on the chain of events that led to the current situation. The Celestial refusal to communicate with Thor, some rashness on Thors own part, and most importantly the Celestial decision to imprison the Odinmind.

“Some of the pantheons are talking of multi-dimensional war against the Celestials father” said Thor “the temporary imprisonment of the Odinmind has been unacceptable to them – you know historically they see you as their natural leader.”

“No one would benefit from such a confrontation mighty Thor” said Odin “I have seen the power of the Celestials and the grandeur of their homeworld.”

“But if it came to it father could we defeat them ? ”

“Eventually I believe we could” said Odin “ if all the Multiverse’s pantheons were to participate – there are so very many of us and we are so diverse and (hesitating a little) they have a great weakness my son one that the Elder God aggregate divined in its attack.” “ A weakness to a particular type of arcane magic that for the nonce I shall keep to myself.”

Odin then moved off to a meeting with many hundreds of skyfathers and war gods.

“I shall do my best to calm them Thor, for the sake of us all.” End

A Previously Untold Tale, The Battle for Asgard

For long millennia the great powers of the Multiverse, the cosmic entities, the gods, and others pondered what might happen if the greatest among them all were to clash. They wondered whether the Multiverse itself might survive a clash between the great Galactus and Allfather Odin. History has it that in our reality these two true titans never met, yet there are other realities. As close to ours and at the same time more distant than the wildest imaginings. Nor should we ever presume that our own reality is somehow the most important.

In one of these realities, at a time when both titans were a little younger, the devourer of worlds did indeed come a calling on the Allfathers door step. Yet Asgard is more than Odin and Galactus did not come alone.

The high place of Hlidskalf

Moving at the speed of thought the silver form streaked in high orbit around the Earth and returned whence it came in less than the blink of an eye.

Even so, it was not fast enough to escape the attention of Lord Odin, standing with his young adult, warrior son, in the place from which he can see all things.

Odin: "The Herald of Galactus has discovered Earth; we must presume his master will follow."

Thor: "The earth is under our protection father; surely he would not willingly challenge the power of Asgard."

Odin: "We must never underestimate Galactus my son."

Some time later - still at Hlidskalf

Odin, Thor and the Grand Vizier watch the approach of the worldship of Galactus, still several light years distant, with deepening apprehension. They are even briefly able to see inside the great vessel.

Grand Vizier: " He comes then my Lord, there can no longer be any doubt, the event we have all long feared is now almost upon us "

Odin: "Aye Vizier, and as you see, he doth not come alone."

Grand Vizier (shuddering): "The herald we would expect, but that abomination?"

Grand Vizier: "His power rivals yours my lord; can you stop him and prevent the destruction of Earth and Asgard?"

Odin: "In all truth I do not know, never before have I faced his like."

Deep Space - the Worldship of Galactus - several light years from Earth and Asgard

The gleaming silvery form of Galactus herald, the former Norrin Radd, raced toward Asgard at many times the speed of light.

Lagging not far behind came Galactus himself ensconced within his monstrous star ship, a law unto himself and

totally unassailable. If this were not bad enough he was, for reasons unknown, accompanied by his first creation Tyrant. Suddenly the Silver Surfer's speed slowed almost to a halt and the Worldship did likewise, both slowed by an unseen force.

A massive, if temporary, demonstration of the OdinPower. A huge audio-visual image of Odin, with Thor in the background, appeared before them.

Odin (audio-visual image): "What do you here Mighty Galactus? what business have you on course for Earth and golden Asgard?"

The world devourer left his ship to engage the image of Odin.

Galactus: "I do that which I must, great Odin, nor am I accustomed to having my actions questioned." "What I am, my purpose, the basis for my existence in the Multiverse, is already known to you."

Odin: "This is my first and my final warning to you Galactus cease from your present course and seek sustenance elsewhere or you shall feel the full force of the Odinpower."

Odin (continuing): "You could have chosen any world yet you come to Earth and Asgard and challenge me, I who am the will and the way and the only power capable of stopping you, truly your actions are incomprehensible to me!"

An unimpressed Galactus chose not to continue the communication and the audio-visual image of Odin disappeared.

Galactus and the Silver Surfer joined a similarly unimpressed Tyrant within the worldship.

Tyrant: "Odin is nothing but a blustering blowhard and a buffoon, his son still young and inexperienced, and Asgard and the pitiful world they protect, weak and ripe for the taking." "They have no true conception of the power they face."

Silver Surfer: "Should you reconsider Galactus? the OdinPower is spoken of in whispers in every corner of the cosmos and cannot be take lightly, and there are a multitude of other worlds "

Galactus: "I will allow none to dictate to me, Surfer; the godly energies of Asgard will satiate me for a long time. I need not know the hunger again for a millennium. This will be Asgard's gift to me. As to Odin, a clash between us was inevitable."

Galactus: "One more thing Surfer, I am augmenting your power cosmic to maximum level until Asgard falls!"

For the remainder of his journey to Earth and Asgard, Galactus had the defensive screens of his worldship at full capacity along with the ships detection devices focussing on Asgard for whatever attack Odin might launch.

While the path of the ship was monitored by Odin and was followed by Loki in astral form no other action was taken until the great ship's arrival. On route Galactus lashed out more than once at the astral form of Loki which was nothing more than an irritation to him. Loki finally retreated before Galactus could destroy his astral form.

Odin, the Grand Vizier and Thor, now joined by Lady Sif, Balder and the Warriors Three continued to monitor the approach of Galactus.

Odin: "Ready your hammer my son, in the place that is not a place, and prepare on my word, for the godblast you have tested, against Galactus or Tyrant". "Spare them not, let them feel your full might !"

Odin: "Balder, prepare the Destroyer armour and inhabit it and stand ready to receive the life forces of all other Asgardians should this be necessary"

Thor: "What of great Surtur my liege? and Ymir, Hela and Karnilla - where stand they in this? "

Odin "Alas, my son if Galactus doth only confine his efforts to Earth and Asgard proper, they will likely view him as an ally." "Yet it will be different if Galactus moves against all of

the nine worlds.” “For now, they do sit upon the fence as those of Midgard might say “

Lady Sif: “Milord, I hesitate to broach the matter, but if all else fails, how will you protect your children?”

Odin: “If we look like failing, I will transport all living beings of Earth and Asgard, to another dimension. If I can no longer do this, Lord Zeus, while he will not join us in battle, will do it for me.”

Thor: “Father you have allowed Galactus to approach close to Asgard, even if he is defeated there will surely be great damage? “

Odin “Attend my words all, for now am I to use a great defensive weapon, knowledge of which, I have held back from you. Yonder within the Great Hall stands the Shield of Odin, while it doth presently take the form of a physical shield, it is far, far more than that. The shield can take the form of a great force field large enough to protect all Asgard, at least for a time.”

Grand Vizier: “All is in readiness then Milord Odin, there be no more that we can do”

Odin: “Just one more thing Vizier, the OdinAxe must be retrieved from the bowels of Asgard!”

Galactus Worldship arrived shortly thereafter and while staying many thousands of kilometre above Asgard City, it still loomed monstrosly and menacingly large.

While such an arrival would normally cause great panic among a population the Asgardians were a hardy race and were angered more than cowed. They were confident in themselves that Odin would not allow the destruction of Asgard.

Many manned the city’s various defences such as the mystical and electronic cannon dotted around various

fortifications, although this was only a token gesture. Still more readied themselves for the possibility that Odin might summon their life energies to join Balder in the Destroyer construct.

Galactus, Tyrant, and the Surfer left the Worldship, descending too then levitating high above Asgard City. Odin mystically enhanced his own size to match Galactus and levitated forth to meet him. Alone among the city's defenders Galactus realised he could not locate the mighty Thor.

Galactus: "Surfer, I cannot locate the son of Odin, find him for me!"

With that the two great titans, Mighty Odin Allfather of Asgard and Great Galactus Devourer of Worlds came physically face to face. For a moment it seemed that the entire multiverse held its breath. Even Tyrant.

Odin: "It is not too late even now, great Galactus, for you to withdraw from Asgard; there are none who will think less of you for it"

Galactus: "I will, mighty Odin, I am here and I will wait no longer. You have made grand preparations to defend your realm but in the end they will prove to be useless"

Odin (telepathically): "Thor, Balder, strike at Tyrant now!"

From the place that both is and is not part of Asgard, where even Galactus could not detect him, Thor the mighty, as one with the hammer supreme unleashed a torrential outburst of pure Asgardian energy.

The Silver Surfer striving to locate Thor was at the edge of the godblast that was not meant for him and despite his augmented might was blasted from the skies of Asgard either dead or severely injured.

Tyrant raised what passed as an arm in defiance of the godblast as his own personal force shields groaned.

Yet even as the miscreant was forced back to the worldship he struck out multiple energy blasts at the locations of the

physical bodies of the life forces that occupied the destroyer killing some. How had he known where they were? It was sufficient to confuse and delay the Balder (and other Asgardians) Destroyer attack.

At that self same moment as Tyrant recoiled from the godblast of Thor, Odin and Galactus came to grips. Energies Asgardian and cosmic, dancing and writhing and even intermingling across the full length and breadth of their huge forms and for hundreds of metres around them. The opposing energies densest and strongest around their balled fists.

Odin: "Have at thee then Galactus, know that you shall not find the Lord of Asgard wanting"

As Odin pulled the white hot OdinAxe from his back and Galactus moved to take it from the Asgardian grasp.

Odin: "I gave you every opportunity to withdraw and you would have none of it, now face the consequences of defying the Allfather!"

Galactus: "What you say or do now Odin matters not at all! even as I restrain you Tyrant will destroy Asgard."

Yet from the Allfathers perspective with Tyrant retreating into the Worldship from the godblast of Thor this looked no more than a vainglorious boast.

Yet in the next moment the two titans were flying though space and time far beyond Asgard, locked together as they continued to struggle for the OdinAxe. Odin seemed unable to break Galactus grip and the world destroyer seemed equally unable to wrest the axe from Lord of Asgard.

Mystical energies competed with the power cosmic and at times seemed to almost merge with and become one with the power cosmic. To any capable of observing them they must have seemed like a blazing star hurtling through the

heavens except that this “star” knew no constraints as to distance and time nor even as to interdimensional travel. It has been said that Odin weakens the longer he might be away from Asgard and such must have been a concern for Thor as he saw his father disappear. Yet just one of Odin’s reasons for long ago creating the OdinAxe was that it would always enable him to draw on those nearly inexhaustible reservoirs of Asgardian energy wherever he might be in the Multiverse. Thus as Galactus drew as required from various energy sources that they passed near so Odin in turn drew via the OdinAxe on the vast reservoirs of Asgardian energy that exist in and around Asgard and in certain other places. At one point the path of the two titans and the axe led into the very core of Balderon largest of all the black holes of the Multiverse where they slowed under the most immense naturally occurring gravitational pull in existence. In this place Galactus released his grip on the axe and left the immediate vicinity of the black hole curious to see if Odin could escape it.

Odin: “Did you think one such as I could be defeated so easily, so cheaply, Galactus?”

Again Galactus grasped the Axe clearly thinking that wresting it from Odin was the key to defeating the Father of Asgard. Their journey through space and time continued. There is a phenomenon not often encountered in the Multiverse. It is similar to a black hole but its pull extends across all known dimensions. Anything held in its super gravitational pull is drawn into it and if it survives at all is thrown out into the ethereal void beyond the Multiverse. No one has as yet provided a name for this perhaps the greatest of all the Multiverse’s natural phenomena since from the reference point of any particular dimension it seems only like an ordinary black hole.

Whether unknowingly or otherwise Odin and Galactus sped directly into one such. The forces acting upon them to expel them from the Multiverse were so great that for the merest

instant they were forced to cooperate in order to escape those forces. It was a sobering experience for them both. Both of the titans were developing a grudging respect for one another.

Odin: "I see that they do not call you the great Galactus without good reason."

Galactus: "Nor are you referred to as Odin the Almighty without justification worthy one."

At some point in their continuing journey Galactus and Odin began probing then actually entering each others mindscapes raising their struggle to a different level. The struggle moved from one mindscape to another. If Galactus found Odin's mindscape unusual Odin found the mindscape of Galactus utterly alien and difficult to deal with.

The struggle within the mindscapes seemed very physical in nature. Odin swung with the OdinAxe and though Galactus sought to avoid it the fearsome axe seemed to effortlessly rip not only through any personal force fields but also to rip away chest armour. When Galactus was in Odin's mindscape he was on the offensive and in his own he was on the defensive.

At one point Odin shouldered the OdinAxe and fists again balled and coruscating with energy he traded blows with Galactus for what seemed like all Eternity. The pain and tiredness both felt from the mental confrontation seemed every bit as real as if it were a purely physical contest. Eventually with Galactus on the attack in Odin's mindscape the Lord of Asgard landed a blow of such staggering might that Galactus found himself back in his own mindscape. The battle continued to rage. Odin with his hands about the devourer's throat and Galactus responding with lancing beams of the power cosmic directly from his eyes into Odin's face.

Exactly when the conflict of the minds ceased and gave way to a purely physical confrontation seemed unclear. However at some point it became evident to both combatants that

not only had their battle returned to the physical level but that their long journey had ceased.

They were back above Asgard city.

They moved apart from each other, both looking to gain some small respite.

*

While the two titans had been gone the fate of Asgard had rested with Thor and the Balder Destroyer.

Thor had forced Tyrant back into the worldship and the swathes of god force had damaged even the great ship. Yet the godblast had run its course and Tyrant re-emerged from the ship of Galactus. His face leering with raw hatred.

Tyrant: "Are you done now little one? has your small tirade run its course?"

The mighty Thor rotated mjolnir and flew up at Tyrant intending to fell him with a flurry of hammer blows. Yet Tyrant's claws moving with unexpectedly frightening speed raked Thors battle armour penetrating it and ripping into dense Asgardian flesh and bone. Worse the claws contained both vicious alien toxins and searing alien energies.

Badly hurt Thor plummeted to the city below though he did not cry out. He would not give Tyrant that satisfaction.

Yet the very land of Asgard below slowed the thunders descent and as he landed it both healed him and gave its power up to him even before he invoked it.

Tyrant descended to Earth his claws dripping with venomous physical and energy poisons.

Tyrant: "You still live little one, let us see how many alien toxins your small distasteful blood bag body can absorb!"

Yet in a part of his mind the thing of evil knew that something was not right.

The mighty Thor mystically increasing his size to that of Tyrant drew even more energy and power from the very rocks and soil of Asgard funnelling it through his hammer and striking against Tyrant. At that precise moment the Balder (and other Asgardian) Destroyer, energies still

building atop its visor, finally overcome the confusion and disorientation of Tyrant's attack on its members physical bodies.

The Destroyers greatest weapon, its disintegration beam hit Tyrant full on just as Thor channelled almost all the energies of the land of Asgard at the same target.

It is said that the death screams of Tyrant could be heard in all of the nine worlds and even beyond.

By the time Galactus and Odin returned to Asgard, the world devourer's partner and creation was dead and his herald was at best injured and off the field of battle.

Galactus took in the overall situation:

Odin, with the white hot OdinAxe held high was preparing to launch a skyfather level godblast at him through the axe while Thor from below readied himself for a similar effort using mighty mjolnir. To add to this the Destroyer construct, energies building again atop its disintegration visor have levitated up to his level.

Near exhaustion the great Galactus, destroyer of worlds, third force of the Universe faced total annihilation.

Galactus looked for the option of retreat to his partially damaged worldship and then looked at Odin. The titan saw from the look of steel in Odin's eye that the Allfather would not allow of it. Something had hardened in the mind of Asgard's Lord and Odin's intent was clear. That Galactus would perish here today along with his abominable creation. Then Galactus managed a smile as he saw his fellow siblings materialise at a distance. Great Eternity and Mistress Death.

Still the godblast energies continued to form and still the disintegration energies built atop the Destroyers visor. Even Eternity could not save him.

Odin: "After what you have attempted this day Galactus, did you think I would allow your siblings to save you?"

Galactus: "I will not beg for mercy, Almighty One, such is not the way of Galactus, do what you must, and do it now!"

Yet even as he mouthed the words Galactus drew forth the ultimate nullifier that had been upon his person all through the battle with Odin. He held it high and threatening.

No further words were exchanged between the parties yet the look of disgust upon the faces of Odin and Thor said it all.

Galactus retreated to his worldship then left Asgard without delay. Though exhausted and humiliated he would at least live to fight another day.

That was all that mattered he kept telling himself. He had survived.

Both Odin and Thor knew that he would never come this way again.

End

Odinforce

Neandarr the wise, high teacher and last surviving Elder of the Multiverse looked out among the few remaining stars. With him were his young charges, a cherished group of youth comprising all of the "last born."

"Please tell us Elder," pleaded one of them "of the first time war."

"And of the first and second Multiverse wars," whispered another student,

"And of the second and last time war," implored yet another young voice among the small group.

"No account of those and the other great wars," replied the Elder of the Multiverse, "indeed no account of the history of the Multiverse, can be complete without a reference to the gods of Asgard. Of the Odinforce, the Thorforce, and the Magniforce.

The faces of the Elder's charges lit up just as their voices fell silent at the mere mention of these three awesomely powerful, fundamental forces for good. Their young minds immediately conjured up images of the ancient gods of greater Asgard. Of All Father Odin, All Father Thor, All Mother Sif and the High Lord Magni. Have not young children's voices throughout history fallen silent at the mention of these great names, these great and noble forces for good.

Where can I start? thought the venerable one, knowing that the ancient stories had inevitably been distorted over time. Of the few who yet lived only he, and just one other, were capable of unravelling what was fact from fiction. Actual events from the myths and legends that had arisen from them. The truth from half truths and indeed the outright lies promulgated by some. Yet these few before him, the true last born, had the right to know. The right to know what was surely the greatest story of them all.

*

"The first of the great intertemporal wars was a direct challenge by the dark fates and their equally dark followers to the authority of Times Guardian himself," began the Elder, his mind drifting back into that inconceivably distant past.

Neandarr recalled how after the now moment wave was destroyed, Times Guardian had asked the gods of Asgard for help and it had been forthcoming. The Elder remembered it as if it were only yesterday, the sight of great Odin holding the spear gungir high and the mighty Thor holding with both hands the hammer mjolnir and side by side how they called forth the greatest of all the time storms. How the two titans became as one with the great storm and how they took the weight of battle from Time's Guardian's shoulders affording him a moment of respite, before he rejoined the Asgardians in thwarting the assault on time.

At the mere mention of the hammer of Thor, the greatest weapon ever known to have existed anywhere and anywhen, the children huddled even closer together. Not in fear, or because of the cold, but in absolute awe.

Pride swelled within the Elder's breast as he related the histories and the crucial role played by Asgard. In almost all of the truly major confrontations Asgard had been the nexus point. No matter what happened elsewhere it was here on the Asgardian axis that any truly Multiversal confrontation would be won or lost. Unlike his fellow Elders, Neandarr, youngest of his ilk, had called Odin, Thor, Magni, and others of the gods of Asgard friend and, in one case, still did.

Neandarr told his charges of the first of the Multiverse wars. An immensely destructive and yet inconclusive conflict that saw among other things the complete annihilation of the Celestial race.

He remembered Odin and Thor and just a few other surviving gods returning to Asgard after the war and sitting for days among the debris at the great table in the hall of

Odin. All of them exhausted, nursing their wounds, re-gathering their strength, and mourning lost comrades. Too weary to talk about the war or even to consider the rebuilding of Asgard.

Yet as they sat there Odin could see the anger, the righteous wrath slowly building again within his son. An increasing rage, like the building of a head of steam in a boiler, a rage that would have to have an outlet. Or else become madness.

At this time Thor the mighty chose to travel forth alone among the stars, returning some days later. He said nothing and no one asked anything of him but Odin saw that the anger had died in his son. At that time many detected the annihilation of a fundamental force of the Universe. That which some had referred to as the Phoenix force and which had sided with the cosmic powers was no more. Thor never admitted to it, but Odin knew and later Neandarr knew. The cosmic powers, war weary beyond all measurement, did not respond, at least not at this time, perhaps they did not care.

*

The so called second Multiverse war was really a continuation of the first after the hiatus in which the gods and the cosmic powers re-gathered their strength. Yet the surviving cosmic and abstract powers had been more cunning. Waiting until a bone weary Odin entered the inevitable Odin sleep before recommencing hostilities. By staying in Asgard itself the mighty Thor had been able to protect his sleeping father during that second conflict. Yet with its inconclusive end no one, not even Thor himself, had been able to awaken Odin.

The constant risk of attack on Odin while he underwent the great sleep caused Thor to draw on magics most ancient and ensconce the life force of Odin and the essence of the Odinfors and indeed all that was his sleeping father within the artefact known as the ring of Odin. In actual fact a pocket dimension. The Thunderer wore this on his finger at

all times, to hold his father close and in order to best protect him. Though the reality construct offered some protection itself.

Yet in the second and final time war as the mighty Thor destroyed the dark fates themselves the ring of Odin came from his finger and was irretrievably lost. Buried deep in the well of time and amongst a complex labyrinth of dimensions and realities. A final act of vengeance by the defeated dark fates.

Though ultimately the second time war is known more for something else. Weary beyond all imagining Time's Guardian passed on the burden of his responsibilities to the only entity in all of existence that was both worthy and capable. The mighty Thor, now All Father Thor, took up the mantle and became the new Time's Guardian. Yet it was one of those unexplainable mysteries of the Multiverse that even the new Time's Guardian could still not locate the Odin ring. Neandarr remembered the third and final Multiverse war. As Times Guardian the mighty Thor did not, could not, intervene directly in the conflagration. Though Thor moved to contain the conflict, and to prevent it from destroying the time stream. The war led to victory for the gods and the final irreversible defeat of the cosmic powers. Yet at a terrible cost. High Lord Magni and all Asgard paid the ultimate price for the success of the gods.

The mighty Thor would continue as Time's Guardian destined to fulfil that most lonely role until Time's End. Yet an almost unbearable sadness was upon him. A sadness he might have to bear for eternity.

*

As the historical account came to a close, the smallest of the children sitting before the Elder looked up at his teacher. The boy, the last born among the last born themselves, was the first to notice. Why had he never noticed the ring on Neandarr's finger before? It was large and ornate and now seemed to be growing brighter with each passing second.

It was at this moment that one of those events considered important enough to be witnessed not by one but by the entire race of Watchers came to pass. Except the Watchers could not be there to witness it for down to the last individual, they were no more.

In a glorious moment with few if any parallels in Multiversal history an entirely unexplainable thing happened. A force which had not seen the light of day in untold eons began to emerge from within the ring.

Neandarr watched on with just as much wonder as his small charges as his old friend re-awakened.

*

Long ago when even the mighty Thor had stopped searching for his father, Neandarr, high teacher, Elder of the Multiverse, had quietly, patiently and painstakingly, continued the search for his old friend. The longest search in all of the history of the Multiverse. That Neandarr now bore the ring of Odin on his finger, was testament to his eventual success.

Who knows what the reasons were for Almighty Odin awakening now from the sleep eternal? Perhaps it was some divine, unstoppable mechanism of life reasserting itself here so close to Time's End.

Can you even begin to imagine the power of Odin, one of the truly great powers of the Multiverse, after he has slept for untold ages?

There to meet Odin as the All Father breathed life anew back into a dying Multiverse was another All Father. Son and Father, Times Guardian and Times Saviour.

Thor and Odin together again. Who was there to gainsay them? Who would deny the mighty Thor this time of happiness?

Neandarr looked out at the ever increasing stars in the heavens and the silence gave him his answer.

*

Nearby a young boy, knowing intuitively that he would no longer be the last of the last born, cried with tears of joy.

End

The Intervention

The far distant future

Somewhere in our Universe

The long search for truth had finally brought the two humanoid types to a remote and cheerless world.

From their mountainous vantage point they looked out over the ancient battlefield. Strewn across it were the remnants of vast amounts of military hardware.

Urrle recognized some of the technology. It would have been state of the art for that time.

Amidst the battlescape two things stood out. A fallen warrior, almost perfectly preserved, and dressed in the light body armour of the Brell. And something else. Something that seemed to have no place in this battlescape. A small hammer with a head large in relation to its relatively short handle. The handle was wrapped in some resilient material and there was a thong of the same material at the base of the handle.

“Does either of them mean anything to you?” Urrle enquired of his companion.

The venerable ancient, Leandarr, the oldest living of all among the Tolden super power empire, thought for a moment. “The soldier is probably the last soldier of the Brell to have died in battle during the great war, but the hammer, I don’t know, something is tugging at my mind but I cannot say what it is. Though I feel that it is, or at the very least once was, an object of great importance.”

“Arcane energies abound here,” said Urrle “even I can sense them. You, you must be overwhelmed by them,” he added looking with concern at his friend.

“I recognize some of the residual mystical energies,” responded the old man fearfully “the energy signature of that which we never speak. As to the other energies, they appear to be associated with the hammer and I do not recognize them.” Yet even as he said this, the elder felt

something again tugging at his mind. Something from long, long ago.

Urrle was thoughtful. How strange that that, of which they never speak, an entity which had not even been sighted for so long, could still evoke such fear even in the minds of the Tolden. Would they ever be entirely free of that fear?

"There is something more Urrle," the Tolden elder's voice was very soft, "perhaps you do not sense it? Residual elemental godpower. Gods of some kind were once in this place.

*

"Looks like it was a fair fight then," quipped Urrle, almost changing the subject "one single Brell soldier against a well equipped technically advanced army."

"Only if you also count the downed star fighters and the starship we saw on the way in," said his friend, pulling up several over the horizon three dimensional images simultaneously. "I'd say he took them down as well."

"Of course there's the hammer," said Urrle quietly and with a respect that he just knew was appropriate "we don't know what part it played in the battle here. Like the Brell armour, the hammer seems totally undamaged, even in this fearsomely hostile environment,"

Both of the male humanoids knew that Brell body armour could survive civilizations yet perhaps the hammer could to.

"There may have been two separate battles here, at around the same time" speculated the Tolden elder, after a long and thoughtful silence. "That between the Brell soldier and the army he destroyed. Yet also, I think, something else, something of an even greater order of magnitude." Urrle was silent for quite a while. The elder had never seen him so subdued.

"Whoever or whatever wielded that hammer at the time," concluded the old man "fought in this place against that of which we do not speak."

Urrle just nodded, knowing that the residual mystical energies and godpower could only lead to that conclusion. Urrle's head started to hang a little lower out of respect.

*

Under the elder's watchful gaze, Urrle moved first to touch the hammer and then to lift it. As a highly enhanced humanoid his own natural strength would enable him to lift huge machineries, even a Tolden star fighter. With the exoskeleton implants in his light body armour this natural strength was multiplied many fold. Yet he was unable to budge the hammer even minutely. His Tolden companion smiled as if somehow, he was not at all surprised at Urrle's lack of success.

Unaccustomed to failure on any level Urrle, military adviser and, at times, enforcer for the mighty Tolden gave up in frustration. His ancient companion ran a small instrument over the hammer. "I fear it will require far, far more than your strength to lift this hammer," he smiled, almost apologetically. Intuitively the old man knew that no force, no matter how powerful, other than the rightful one, would ever be able to lift this ancient weapon.

Then the old man's mind drifted to the past. To a time that he was still old enough to remember and to the events that had led to the answers that they still sought.

*

He remembered the Brell as they had been. A race that, for long millennia, traversed the stars and even the dimensions as easily as ordinary men might walk to a house in the next street. A benevolent, near omnipotent race, that took it upon themselves to make up for what they perceived as Gods failings.

But even God had enemies.

Those many enemies formed an unwieldy alliance. Brought together with a single purpose. By a dark, vast and manipulative intelligence that may not even have been

native to our plain of existence. Intelligence possessed of inconceivable power in its own right.

Even the mighty Brell were surprised by the level of coordination between such disparate alien races, cultures and technologies. It became such that the attackers were everywhere at the same time, overloading even the Brell capacity to respond. An endless stream of starships of all shapes, sizes, and designs moved inexorably onwards and inwards to the very heart of the Brell Empire.

The once many friends of the Brell were conspicuous by their absence and lack of support. In one of the darker, if not darkest, times of our Multiverse it is to the eternal shame of us all that no one raised a hand in their defence. With just one exception.

*

It is a matter of irrefutable historical record that the inevitable destruction of the Brell home worlds never took place. A power, unquestionably of the first order, intervened on behalf of this great race and saved it from destruction. As the vast star fleets bore down upon the Brell home worlds a series of cosmic storms, the like of which have never been seen before or since, spread across their advance not merely stopping the advancing fleets but in fact annihilating them down to the very last star ship, troop transporter, and star fighter.

The old man, the Tolden elder, knew that the historical record was sketchy beyond this point. Still, it was generally thought that the saviours of the Brell then turned their attention to that dark entity that had sought the destruction of that super power empire. At that time some speculated it was a battle that moved on to a higher plane. A battle that, for all anyone knew, might still be in progress now. A forever war.

*

The Tolden elder's mind snapped out of its reverie and back to the present moment. He looked among the heavens

sensing the visitors even before they were detected by his and Urrle's technologies.

Urrle looked up in silence and in awe.

Three very majestic human type physical forms descended planetward at almost leisurely pace. One resplendent upon a large many legged unknown animal form. Another in some form of chariot device conveyed by equally unknown but smaller animal forms. The third of the three entities simply levitated downward without any apparent means of transport.

The old man, the Tolden elder, knelt and cried. He knew that here now were the savours of the Brell. Coming, after all this time, to claim what was theirs.

"Lords," he called out to them as he bowed even lower, as low as his venerable frame would allow him. The apparently eldest of the three majestic forms motioned for him to rise. While another of the entities, neither the eldest nor the youngest, raised his hand and the hammer artefact whose inertia had defied Urrle's best efforts flew gently but enthusiastically in to that entities hands.

Urrle smiled and nodded respectfully. Here then was the owner, the true and rightful wielder of the hammer weapon. Urrle recognized in the hammer wielder a very great warrior.

*

All three of the imposingly regal entities looked on with respect at the long dead soldier of the Brell. At that moment the light armour of the Brell began to flow towards the youngest of the three entities enjoining with that entities own armour. The entity seemed untroubled as if such an occurrence had happened before.

Leandarr could sense the similarity of the three entities. That they might even be of the same blood.

All three smiled at the ancient and before they departed skyward the oldest of the three entities moved towards Leandarr and handed the Tolden an artefact. The scorched yet still recognizable remains of an ancient Talisman.

“What is it?” asked Urrle.

“It would have belonged to he of whom we never speak; never would he have been separated from it. There is only one conclusion that we can draw from this.”

The Tolden elder looked at his youthful companion. “I believe we have the answer to that which we have sought,” he said, almost lightly.

“Who, what, were those entities?” asked Urrle as they set about providing the Brell soldier with a decent burial.

“Gods,” responded his friend “gods from a place once known as, ___, as Asgard. “The histories,” Leandarr corrected himself “no, the legends, say they moved on to a higher plane of existence. All this, long before the great war.”

“If what you say is true,” said Urrle, “then they must have come back from that higher plane, come back to help the Brell, to help our Universe.”

“This would not surprise me,” offered Leandarr.

*

There was a long, yet not uncomfortable silence as Urrle and Leandarr both, were deep in their own thoughts.

“Why did they wait so long to retrieve the hammer weapon?” enquired Urrle.

“Who knows?” responded Leandarr, “Perhaps out of respect for the Brell, perhaps for what this place represents, perhaps even time itself may move differently where they are now.”

Urrle held Leandarr in his gaze. “The entity, the god who took the hammer, what did they call him?”

“He was known as Thor, Odinson, god of thunder. Legend has it that he was the greatest warrior that ever lived,” replied the old man. Urrle smiled. He didn’t really need Leandarr or the legends to tell him this. As a warrior himself he already knew.

“Thor, was the one wasn’t he?” asked Urrle “the one who defeated that of which we do not speak? Whether it was

here in our Universe long ago, or on some higher plane of existence and much more recently?"

Leandarr nodded solemnly.

*

Urrle and Leandarr continued the burial of the Brell soldier in silence but both were smiling and at peace with themselves.

End

Against Galactus, Story from an Alternate Time Line

Long it is that men, gods, and cosmic entities have wondered what the result might be if the mighty King Thor were to clash with the great Galactus in unrestrained conflict.

King Thor for his part to draw on the best available resources of Asgard and Galactus to draw on the most powerful combination of heralds he can contrive and the full resources of his gigantic Worldship.

It has been given to me, a humble scribe, to witness this clash in an alternate reality and the events leading up to it at first hand. I shall describe these events as best I am able although as a mortal man I do not pretend to fully understand all of the events that transpired.

It is the year 2500 AD as mortal men have chosen to measure time.

Odin is long since dead and King Thor rules wisely over a prosperous Asgard that has known few challenges over the past 500 or so years. Thor has married the Lady Sif, perhaps his greatest love, and the only progeny their son Magni, strongest of all the gods of Asgard, has now flowered into mature adulthood.

Orikal the seer, so long imprisoned by King Geirridour of the trolls, now enjoys a trusted position as chief seer to King Thor. Thialfi also has the ear of King Thor, as his trusted principal adviser.

The warriors three continue to enjoy Thors friendship and continue on missions for him, sometimes accompanied by Thialfi and Prince Magni.

Orikal's ability to foresee troublesome events is one of the main reasons for Asgard's stability, with Lord Thor able to take forceful action before potential threats get out of hand. After some 500 years King Thor is no longer inexperienced in the use of the OdinPower, though in truth it is a long time since either he or the armies of Asgard have been seriously tested in battle.

Loki has long since given away any aspirations to the throne of Asgard and has been rewarded with Governorship of the colony of New Asgard with substantial autonomy.

For a long time there was a falling out between Thor and Magni, but now thanks largely to the efforts of Queen Sif, the old wounds have been healed. As a youth Magni had been very proud of his great strength and had at one time come into conflict with Earth's mightiest mortal the green behemoth known as the Hulk. In truth Magni had been soundly and badly beaten by the Hulk a much more savage and experienced fighter. The Hulk was capable through sheer rage of equalling and surpassing even Magni's strength.

King Thor's advice was to let the matter rest, but shamed at his defeat Magni could not do so. He sought the aid of the enchantress to heal his wounds and then sought out Thors great belt of strength unused in quite some time.

Confronting the Hulk again and even with the belt of strength Magni again began to find an enraged Hulk too much for him. Refusing to be shamed a second time Magni's anger increased until he entered for the first time in his life a state of warrior's madness. Magni then reined blow after blow after blow down upon the Hulk continuing long after the behemoth was unable to provide any effective resistance and eventually killing him.

It was Magni's most shameful moment and an episode that estranged him from his father for a very long time indeed. Still this was a long time ago and many of Earths heroes at the turn of the 21st century had, sadly, gone the way of all

mortal flesh. Finally father was reconciled with son and mighty mjolnor one of the greatest weapons known to god or man was passed from father to son. Soon thereafter Thor made another present to Magni, a great suit of armour, forged by the trolls and more durable than anything that had been made in times past for either Thor or Odin.

At one point, early in his reign and briefly unhappy with events on Midgard, Lord Thor considered a major intervention in the affairs of men. But, in this alternate reality, this was no more than a passing thought which Thor quickly dismissed. "It is not our place to do so" said Queen Sif.

Thor did however extended Asgard's dominion by the creation of three new colonies in neighbouring pocket dimensions, each of a size similar to Continental Asgard. These were New Odin, New Baldur, and New Asgard. Each new colony seemed more verdant and more fertile than even Asgard itself.

Thus all did indeed seem well with Asgard and its colonies. But quite suddenly and unexpectedly all contact via the dimensional bridge between Asgard and the colony of New Odin was lost. This surprised King Thor as, though busy with matters of State, he had no premonition of trouble and received no warning of impending trouble from either Orikal or other valued sources such as Loki and Thialfi.

Without delay Thor sought out his chief Seer, Orikal, who advised "for the first time Milord Thor in half a millennium I am unable to clearly foresee events about New Odin or indeed Asgard itself, I cannot understand this." Thor then made audio-visual contact with Loki in New Asgard who had also been unable to contact the New Odin colony and similarly could shed no light on the reasons for the matter. "I shall have to teleport interdimensionally to New Odin myself" mused Thor "though the dimensional bridge has failed surely no power can prevent my own personal teleportation." At that precise instant and at a speed that

few, if any, in Asgard, could match Thialfi arrived from a mission near New Baldur.

“ Lord Thor “ yelled Thialfi “there are reports, unsubstantiated as yet, that Galactus himself has been seen in the vicinity of New Odin and with two new heralds both unknown to observers.” “ Galactus” cried a deeply worried Queen Sif “He has not been seen or heard of in hundreds of years, why does he come this way now ?”

“ I shall soon find out” bellowed King Thor but before he depart for the colony of New Odin , Sif and Thialfi counselled against it. “It may be some kind of trap Milord Thor” said Thialfi “ought you to send others to seek out the true state of affairs ?”

“Aye, perhaps so” said King Thor “I will have my ravens investigate, but swiftly.” “As you know I have granted them powers additional to those provided by Odin and now there is almost nowhere they cannot go and they are almost impossible to detect.”

As he impatiently awaited the return of his ravens and anticipating the worst Thor walked down a set of winding steps and toward a heavily locked room, opening the shackles with a flick of his fingers. In front of him lay a sight he had not seen for a great many years one of Asgard’s greatest weapons – the dread Destroyer construct. Many years after the death of Odin, all skyfathers had acceded to a request from Lord Thor to further enhance the capabilities of the Destroyer. These increased capabilities had not as yet been tested on the field of battle.

Through his ravens and through other means King Thor determined that Galactus accompanied by two previously unknown heralds had used some adaptation of the ultimate nullifier to remove the Asgardian Colony of New Odin from any known plane of existence. Indeed the former existence of New Odin had been effectively erased from the minds of almost all in the cosmos who knew of it , save a select few, close to the truth revealing powers of Lord Thor.

Anticipating and indeed planning for some form of massive retaliation from King Thor Galactus retired with his heralds to the densely populated core of a distant galaxy. There he started to feed to excess.

A member of the race of Watchers after briefly observing events in Asgard was summarily dismissed by King Thor and teleported to observe Galactus.

Asgard City – the throne room of King Thor

“ If Galactus has done this to New Odin “ said Queen Sif “then what is to stop him doing the same to New Baldur, new Asgard or even Asgard itself ?” “I believe I have divined his intentions” said King Thor “and had I not been so occupied with affairs of State I would have detected his approach and dealt with him” “ Let no blame attach to Orikal, Heimdall, Loki or others as the world devourer’s machinations were beyond their capacity to divine.” “ If there be any blame, let it lay with me”

“ Yet know thee all this” continued the Lord of Asgard and its colonies “ that with the power that is available to me nothing is beyond redemption, no events are ever truly set in concrete.” “ If it is games that Galactus would play, then he should remember that I am my fathers son” said Thor “and surely when it came to schemes within schemes and wheels within wheels there were none better than Odin” “Except now, perhaps me” smiled Thor.

Meanwhile Magni, rendered asleep by Lord Thor, for fear of his taking precipitate action against Galactus, dreamt on. His dreams were filled with his two battles with the Hulk when he was but a callow youth. He had long since realised that as a mature adult he would be far too much for the Hulk, had the behemoth lived. As an adult he would never have needed either the belt of strength or warriors madness to defeat the Hulk.

Magni dreamed also of the great suit of armour that had been built for him but which he had not yet used. He had heard his father hint sometimes of its wondrous powers.

Indeed, in recent times, Magni had begun to sense a latent power in himself far beyond anything he would have once thought possible.

Complying with Thor's earlier instructions Loki returned to the throne room with the Destroyer Construct and also with Hogun the Grim.

"I have oft wondered Lord Thor" said Loki "just exactly what refinements you and your fellow skyfathers made to the Destroyer" "I shall not tell you all" said Thor "for ee'n I am not exactly certain of the telepathic and observational reach of Galactus." "We should be well shielded here in Asgard but best to be certain."

"I will say though" continued Thor "that our modifications have been based on all past experience with the Destroyer, especially in the engagement with the Celestial fourth host." "We have learned from our past mistakes !" "Will you yourself enter the Destroyer construct" asked Loki "or leave this to others ?"

"Even that must remain a secret just for the nonce " said Lord Thor.

"We should discuss what is known of the world devourer's new heralds' said Heimdall "I sensed they were of fundamentally different natures, almost diametrically opposed." "I have reached out" even as we speak said Thor "and it doth seem they have some connection with the Celestials - mutated or some form of hybrid Celestial spawn."

"Their different natures are deliberateness on Galactus part" continued Thor "one tends to balance the other and never would they ever join against their master." "Yet they are more powerful and more versatile than any of Galactus past heralds by another order of magnitude and as such cannot be discounted." "I believe that Galactus ultimate goal is to acquire the essence of the Thor/Odin power" said Thor "with this power added to his own he perceives he can reshape reality and will be a completely unstoppable force."

Finally said Thor “Galactus also desires the prize of the Earth including the elder goddess and Earth Mother Gaea which he will take at a whim once he has acquired the Thor/Odin power.”

Galactus heralds are two Celestial brothers acquired at birth when Galactus used a form of the ultimate nullifier on their Celestial birth cocoon. Galactus did not immediately apprise the brothers of their Celestial origins and also left evidence for the Celestial race that the brothers had died at birth. They are known as Shirom the headstrong and Alaim the thinker and of the two Shirom is decidedly more powerful and more loyal to Galactus.

“ Should the need arise” said Thor “we may seek to exploit their differences.”

“Our greatest concern” said Thor “is not so much Galactus himself as his adaptation of the ultimate nullifier, and even of the potential use of the original nullifier should he discover my plans for him.” “ Now, all but Thialfi leave me for the moment” continued Thor “as what I have to say next is for his ears alone.”

Toward the Central Core of a Distant Galaxy

A confident Galactus continued to feed far beyond his normal requirements while his almost diametrically opposed heralds continue to bicker. Taking a break from his feeding the great Galactus returned to his Worldship, there to utilize his vast technologies to learn more of Lord Thors intentions. To his consternation Galactus was largely unable to breach Asgard City’s mental defences and he could only discern snippets of information.

Still confident, even if slightly less so, Galactus left his Worldship to continue feeding.

‘He is no longer a mere godling, but a mature god of vast power” mused Galactus “but in the end how can he possibly triumph against me, the great Galactus, am I not power incarnate and have I not laid the perfect plans for Thors utter defeat ? “

With that a huge audio-visual image of King Thor appeared dwarfing even Galactus Worldship “ I have perfectly foreseen your intentions Galactus and know now that you will not succeed “ “Return the New Odin colony and its inhabitants now to it’s rightful place and leave our Universe never to return ! “

Awaiting the imminent arrival of Lord Thor, Galactus via his Worldship computer had re-programmed Alaim the thinker to full Celestial might but devoid of any resistance to Galactus purpose (a pure fighting machine).. Galactus believed also he has divined from Alaim how to defeat Lord Thor and acquire the coveted Thor/Odin power.

The other herald Shirom had awakened refreshed and also ready to combat Lord Thor. Shirom held an adaptation of the ultimate nullifier ready to fire on Lord Thor. Galactus Worldship defences were also on full alert.

Following shortly after the audio-visual image warning to Galactus, King Thor appeared in all his might and majesty before the world devourer and his two Celestial level heralds. Witnessing the majestic sight of the Lord of all Asgard, Galactus had second thoughts and, perhaps for the first time in all of his long existence, experienced a sense of fear.

Seemingly not far behind King Thor was Thialfi carrying the destroyer armour construct in Thors chariot drawn along by Toothgnasher and Toothgrinder. Also close at hand was the mighty Magni now wearing his specially made armour and carrying the hammer of Magni (once known as the hammer of Thor).

This was the first time Magni had worn the armour crafted only for him but as soon as he donned it the armour seemed to flow around him fitting snugly like a glove. Reassuringly durable yet very light, Magni found that he was immediately familiar with all of the armours many and vast powers which complement his own nigh immeasurable might.

However even at the moment of his arrival on the battlefield Lord Thor has already struck a masterful first blow against his adversaries.

Moments before Lord Thors arrival, Thialfi in the Destroyer Armour momentarily froze time about Galactus and his heralds and in a “stealth” form both invisible and undetectable he retrieved the adapted ultimate nullifier from Shirom.

Immediately thereafter the Thialfi Destroyer “phased” through the outer shell of Galactus Worldship. With knowledge voluntarily supplied by the Silver Surfer the Thialfi Destroyer quickly overcame the ships internal defences and destroyed all of its control systems. The Thialfi Destroyer easily breached any armoured partitions and internal force fields protecting areas within the ship. This had the additional effect of slowly reversing Alaim’s deprogramming.

As a result of the improvements made to the Destroyer Construct in more recent times Thialfi in the Destroyer, was able to retain the speed of his own physical body thus completing all tasks in the mere moments during which time was frozen about Galactus.

With the Worldship now rendered useless and the nullifier removed from them, Galactus and his two Celestial level heralds confronted King Thor, Thialfi in the Destroyer Armour and the newly arrived Prince Magni. Loki attended in astral form, to observe and render what assistance he could. Thor, Magni and the Thialfi/Destroyer mystically assumed the same size as Galactus and his heralds.

Furious at the way he had been outmanoeuvred Galactus and his heralds concentrated their attack on what they perceived as the weak link in the Asgardian triumvirate.- Thialfi in the Destroyer construct. Possibly they also targeted the Destroyer in the hope of recovering the nullifier. For a moment inconceivably vast cosmic energies

crackled around a construct that was originally designed to battle Celestials and which had been further enhanced for that purpose.

However before the attack could gather any real momentum King Thor and Magni combined to hit Galactus with two short duration controlled god blasts. Such an attack would have killed a normally fed Galactus but in his currently overfed state they simply stunned him forcing him to break off the engagement.

Alaim the thinker, though uninjured, paused uncertainly as his deprogramming began to lose its effect and he broke off his attack.

The battle then recommenced with all adversaries engaged in a wild melee and with no definite pattern of attack from either side. At one point the Celestial level heralds hurled nearby uninhabited planets and planetoids at the Asgardian trio but these were either avoided or vaporised. The only forms of attack held in reserve were the Destroyers disintegration weapon and sustained godblasts by Thor and Magni. In all other respects the conflict was unrestrained.. Thialfi was all too aware that once the destroyers disintegrator was used it would take time for the energies to build again atop the disintegrator visor.

The results of the melee were inconclusive, although Loki, even though only in astral form, was hurt by Galactus and left the field of battle.

“To defeat these heralds” mused Thor “I shall appeal to the true nature of Alaim as the effects of his deprogramming unwind and test his loyalty to both Galactus and his brother Shirom.” Thor appealed to Alaim “Now that you know the truth of matters why do you still follow Galactus ?.”

“Do not listen to him my child” intones Galactus “he seeks only to divide us and to set you against your brother.”

Alaim, ever the thinker, and with his deprogramming continuing to unwind found himself questioning his master and his masters motives.

Overcome with anger at the lack of loyalty of his brother and fellow herald and to the despair of Galactus, Shirom the headstrong turned on Alaim the thinker enjoining him in battle.

The Asgardian trio seized this moment of discord among the Celestial level heralds and hit them full on with all their vast arsenal. Magni's godly essence joined not only with the innate energies within his armour but with the power of the hammer supreme. At Magni's direction these energies flowed out toward the warring heralds joined in turn by a sustained godblast from King Thor and the energies flowing from the Destroyers disintegration visor.

Is there anyone who would doubt that this combination - godblasts from Lord Thor and Prince Magni and disintegration thrusts from the Destroyer construct were ultimately the best that Asgard had to offer ? If an attack of this magnitude were to fail, what more then could truly be brought to bear ?

For a moment the Celestial level heralds locked in combat among them selves looked on in bewilderment at the energies pouring against them. But it was, in fact, merely a moment as both heralds succumbed and were reduced to smouldering slags of Celestial armour. Even Galactus, not directly attacked, was thrust aside by the sheer force of the onslaught,

" Should we have saved Alaim" enquired Prince Magni of his father "he seemed totally different to his fellow herald ?"

"Best to be certain" responded Lord Thor "no active herald of Galactus can ever truly be trusted."

"So, great Galactus" said King Thor "it has come down to the two of us" "You are denied the resources of your Worldship, your nullifier and your heralds." "I, in turn choose not to be aided either by the incomparable Magni or the Thialfi Destroyer."

"Your time has come Galactus" said Thor "your ravaging of worlds without number to assuage your unassuageable

hunger comes to its end here and now” “ The suffering of unknown trillions of innocent living beings will be avenged !”

“Have at thee Galactus” cried Thor as he leapt at the world devourer engaging him hand to hand.

With the two titans firmly locked in battle awesome energies crackled about their massive forms and, even at such close quarters, both launched powerful eye blasts against each other. Their fists were balled and surrounded by colossal amounts of coruscating energies as neither seemed to be able to land a truly telling blow.

As their struggle continued the two adversaries increased in size each matching the other, first to Exitar Class Celestial size then far, far beyond this. “ At close quarters and with us of equal size he is stronger than I would have thought”

mused Thor. “but there can be no doubt as to the ultimate outcome of this battle.” “This can only end one way son of Odin” said Galactus “for I am Galactus and I am power incarnate – even one such as you must fall before me ! “

As if to give the lie to his vainglorious boast Galactus, even as he fought, sought to draw (without the aid of his converter apparatus) nourishment from nearby worlds.

Magni quickly stepped in to ensure that Galactus was denied this source of energy.

Straining to his utmost Lord Thor cried out “you have foolishly accepted my choice to battle you in physical/energy close quarter combat.” “In this area you are at best inexperienced while millennia of hand to hand battle experience runs through my veins.” With that Thor broke free of Galactus’s and landed the first of many telling blows. With each blow the great Galactus seemed to grow just a little smaller in stature and Thor responded by decreasing his own size. Also with each blow, part physical part energy attack, Galactus seemed just a little less able to defend himself. In due course the contestation became most unequal and Galactus began to diminish rapidly in size.

“Where will it end ?” mused Prince Magni “when will my father decide to stop ?”

And indeed soon thereafter Prince Magni’s question was answered as Lord Thor did cease his onslaught. But for Galactus the process was now irreversible. His diminution in size (in the absence of any incoming reviving energy) continued apace until he died a mere husk of the mortal man once known as Galan.

“ What of Galactus Worldship “ asked the Thialfi Destroyer “which currently lies totally disabled ?”

“It is a testament to all that Galactus represented” said Lord Thor “it was an instrument in the orgy of destruction and the taking of untold lives and as such it must be completely destroyed.” With that and given that sufficient energies had again built up atop its disintegration beam visor the Thialfi Destroyer again opened its disintegration visor and the result was a foregone conclusion. The Worldship of Galactus simply ceased to exist.

“And New Odin” said Magni “via the adapted nullifier it was simply displaced in time” said Lord Thor. “ to a time before the existence of the Norse Gods when Crom himself didn’t prevail”.

“I am somewhat weakened by our encounters here” continued Lord Thor “but if you will both conjoin with me now, I am sure our combined powers will be more than sufficient to return New Odin and its populace to its rightful place in space and time.”

And it was so.

The Star Ravagers

Our Universe

Some Time in the Future

For the first time in its long existence the entity knew pain, as something more than an abstract concept.

No matter, the star was nearby and in moments the still adolescent entity would feed off it. It was not such a large star, as stars go, and would likely be extinguished in the feeding process. Did it matter that this star system supported intelligent life? Not really. The Star Ravager, like other energy configurations of its ilk, usually avoided populated systems. Sometimes that was not possible.

Before the Ravager could begin feeding, a massive solar flare moved out from the surface of the star, seeking to envelope the entity. This was no ordinary, naturally occurring solar flare. Apart from its greater than usual speed and size it seemed subject to mystical direction.

Located just inside the orbit of the closest planetary mass to the star, the Star Ravager waited to absorb the flare.

Instead it found itself confronted by another sentient being coming to it within the core of the solar flare. Taking a brief snapshot of the newcomers' inner mind, the Star Ravager saw that it was confronted by one of the gods of this system.

An entity that actually chose to reside within the intense heat and crushing pressures of the star.

Atum, son of the elder god Gaea and the Demiurge.

As the two vastly different entities fought, the existence of the star that they contested came into doubt. The Star Ravager drawing increasingly on the energies resulting from the fusion reactions within the star. Atum, desperately trying to prevent this.

Powerful as Atum was, and weakened though his adolescent adversary had been, the result of the contestation, and therefore the fate of the entire star system, seemed in some doubt.

Until, that is, the arrival of another entity, not entirely unrelated to Atum.

A mature individual of the Star Ravagers race would never have chosen to feed here. A mature individual of the race would have recognized the star system for what it was. A system always to be avoided.

Before the contestants now stood a figure out of legend. The mighty Thor, liege lord of all Asgard, son of Odin, and the ultimate protector of the one populated planet of this system and by obvious extension the star that gives it life. And, as circumstances would have it, younger half brother to Atum.

Raising his legendary hammer, Mjolnir, Thor of Asgard drew forth from the Star Ravager those energies that it had stolen and returned them sunward. He also used Mjolnir to transport the large amounts of plasma and hot gases that were swirling about Atum and the Star Ravager. Also returning them sunward.

Balance was restored to our sun, thankfully before any permanent damage was done to it or the worlds that it nurtured. One world in particular.

For the merest moment mighty Mjolnir seemed to react adversely. Thor saw that he had gone too far in the process, absorbing some of the utterly alien energies from the Star Ravager. Thor sought to immediately reverse the process but, at this moment of balance, and for reasons best known to himself, Atum drew out the Star Ravager's inner life force and crushed it.

Where the life force of an entity is low, even impossibly low, Thor the mighty can revive that entity. Be it physical being, energy construct, or something else. What even the mighty Thor cannot do is to bring the dead back to life. Only he who is above us all can do that.

Nor is it the same thing to entirely reconstruct an entity from its molecular components. Not when the life force itself has gone.

So, for the first time, since the act of original creation a Star Ravager perished.

The knowledge of that death was immediately known to all those of the young Star Ravagers race. Wherever they might be.

Thor and Atum looked out among the stars and saw a number of them disappear, seemingly winking out of existence. Normally it would have taken many years for the light from those stars to reach Thor and Atum. But the Star Ravagers had a way, possibly the teleportation of light, to bring their unmistakable demonstration directly to Thor. Thor knew he would not need to go out to them. The Star Ravagers, the mature adults that had so steadfastly avoided our star system, would now come and they would come in strength.

Atum would likely be a casualty. Still the Star Ravagers would doubtless hold Thor, as the greater of the two gods, ultimately responsible for this the first death of one of their kind. What, short of the entire destruction of Sol and Asgard, would satisfy them now?

Atum returned sunward seemingly unrepentant and unable to accept the consequences of his actions.

Thor looked at the sun now returning to normal. The sunspots, the corona, the solar flares and he marvelled at it. Would the great Galactus, or the Celestials, or the Star Ravagers even, have felt this way? Thor knew they wouldn't. The gods still retained a sense of wonder, something that distinguished them from the cosmic powers. Thor returned to Asgard and to the high place at Hlidskalf. From where it is said he can view all things. He saw that no further stars had been expunged. That the Star Ravager demonstration, possibly an expression of grief, seemed to be over. All the stars expunged had belonged to lifeless systems.

The son of Odin pondered on what little he knew of his adversaries. They had, in times past, sought to avoid

conflict and usually only fed from the suns of lifeless star systems. Their only recorded confrontation, until today, was long millennia ago. It was over a single star system with the nearly as enigmatic Celestials. That conflict led to stalemate and eventual withdrawal by both races. Thor had seen today that a single weakened adolescent had been almost too much for Atum himself.

Thor sought the advice of seers, mages, and sorcerers among them Dr Steven Strange, Orikal, Mimir and even Loki. Each was able to add a little extra knowledge of the Star Ravager entities.

Meanwhile Asgard's grand vizier, Thialfi, ensconced himself within the archives of Odin. There, deep in a bound volume of the chronicles and edicts of Odin, he found the first real clue. An indication as to the true nature of the Star Ravagers, where they lay in the overall scheme of things and, just perhaps, what could be done about them.

"It is passing strange" thought the mighty Thor "that even long after his death, my father still continues to help us."

The Star Ravagers came sooner rather than later, much sooner. As Thor knew they would. They came as individual mature units. Twenty of them in all. A representative group. At the edge of our solar system these individual energy configurations joined as one to form one single sentient being. There they/it stayed unmoving, infinitely menacing. As if they/it intended to expunge our star system without even taking the trouble to enter it.

The thunder god had only just moved humanity out of immediate harms way. Purely interdimensional teleportation had been out of the question. The Star Ravagers, though native to our Universe, were frequent interdimensional travellers. They knew the dimensions better than almost any entities

Thor had teleported all living things of the Earth, save the most very powerful of its heroes, to the safest place he knew. An alternate reality construct, created, not so very

long ago, by the combined efforts of many different god pantheons from various parts of the Multiverse. The gods could not even agree on a name for the construct and it remained known only and crudely as Alternate Reality One. Fortunately that was the only thing they could not agree on. The mighty Thor did not completely believe that humanity was entirely safe, even here, and had thus taken further steps to ensure their safety.

Thor had arranged for the most powerful of the Earth's heroes to be on hand at Asgard should they be needed. Which event seemed not unlikely.

Balder lord of light, together with the Grand Vizier, Lady Sif, and the warriors three remained at the high place of Hlidskalf there to view events and be available as required. The ever vigilant Heimdall remained at his post, his superlative senses ever alert, as always.

Atum might have remained in the sun there to fight and die; he might perhaps even have chosen to flee, though this was not the way of the son of the Demiurge.

Instead he assumed his most powerful form, and one of the most powerful god forms known, the primal force, god slayer and demon killer known variously as the Demogorge, the God Eater, Ra, and Ammon Ra.

Teleporting to the location of the Star Ravagers, the Demogorge, shining more brightly than any sun, orbited the monstrous Star Ravager energy configuration using his vast energy siphoning powers to draw off the alien energies.

For the merest moment Demogorge seemed to have some success, growing into a larger and even more grotesque and eventually unrecognizable form before losing all control and crashing into the Star Ravagers. As every molecule, every sub atomic particle that had been Atum/Demogorge was absorbed by the Star Ravagers it became clear that stars were not necessarily their only source of food. Something the mighty Thor, thanks to the grand vizier's research, already knew.

The Demogorge fought magnificently. He must surely have known that it was a suicide mission. Perhaps he hoped that his own death would serve to satisfy the Star Ravagers. But it was not to be.

Upon the death of the Demogorge, the Star Ravagers began feeding, from the edge of our star system, upon the energies and the mass of our sun. It was as if the life blood of our sun was being sucked through a giant straw, thousands of miles in diameter and billions of miles in length at speeds beyond that of light.

At that self same instant, the Multiverse's most powerful god struck back.

Very close to our sun the mighty Thor looked on at the massive worm hole through which a constant stream of energy, plasma, and superheated gases was being siphoned off and teleported to the Star Ravagers. It was a fearsome sight to behold, even for a god.

With seemingly comparative ease the son of Odin shut down the wormhole stopping the teleportation before the sun became unbalanced. Before doing so though he directed a massive sky father level god blast through the wormhole and directly at his adversaries.

The god blast was just as awesomely powerful as it was unexpected. Both as individuals, and as the temporarily formed composite being, every one of the mature adult Star Ravagers felt pain. Hitherto only a theoretical concept of not even vague interest to them.

The aggregated Star Ravager entity had been absorbing direct and converted energies from our sun at a frightening rate. Still it was only at a rate commensurate with feeding. They had not been prepared for the godblast overload.

The composite entity separated into its twenty individual sentient entities and began moving menacingly into our star system at high sub light speed. Occasionally taking very short teleportation jumps.

One of the entities, for reasons unknown but possibly sheer petulance, vaporized the rocky mass of Pluto further demoting it in status.

As the Star Ravagers moved further into our system they were at their very highest state of awareness fully ready now to absorb even a multiple godblast type attack. Instead they were confronted with permanent cosmic storms at a level hitherto beyond their experience. Even with their very short teleportation jumps the Star Ravagers could not seem to avoid the storms. Unquestionably the storms were interfering with energy flows within each of the individual Star Ravager energy configurations. At least one among the Star Ravager postulated that they might be entering some form of entrapment.

As a precaution against the energy disruption effects of the cosmic storms some of the incoming Star Ravagers took on powerful physical forms while yet others retained their energy form.

Of a partially mystical nature the disruptive storms seemed too powerful to be the creation of any single being, even of he who is the god of storms himself. The Star Ravagers, but vaguely, sensed the contribution of other beings – other skyfathers, other storm gods, yet others with power over storms, and yet other beings of considerable mystical power.

The storms only increased in intensity the as the Star Ravagers moved inwards toward Earth and the Sun.

All seemed quiet on the blue green world of Earth now devoid of humanity. The home of man seemed peaceful and very vulnerable as it lay seemingly unprotected. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

The father and yes even the mother of the now dead Atum/Demogorge lay awaiting vengeance. The earth mother Gaea and the Demiurge were in good company as great Zeus of Olympus, Vishnu and the other skyfathers of the Earth pantheons stood with them. The Demiurge having

returned from a higher plane of existence for the confrontation. While the Earth Mother was not naturally given to destructive acts, who is to say how a mother may react to the loss of a son? Even when that mother is an elder god.

Eventually, their task of harassing and harrowing the Star Ravager intruders done, the cosmic storms weakened and abated. Then, just as Orikal had predicted to Thor, the Star Ravagers broke into three groups eight individuals proceeding to Earth, six individuals making the dimensional leap to Asgard, and another six individuals proceeding directly sunward.

As Orikal had predicted the dimensional jump to Asgard had not proven so simple. With the rainbow bridge removed, Thor had “hardened” the dimensional barriers between Earth and Asgard. The Star Ravagers, though accomplished interdimensional travellers, only just succeeded in crossing the dimensional rift and were weakened and disoriented upon arrival. An arrival that found them facing the All Asgard Destroyer construct supported by the most powerful heroes of Earth and a burning star that could only have been Balder the Brave, the Lord of Light, in full enraged flight.

But not all events went as predicted by Orikal. Two individual Star Ravagers broke away from the group heading toward Earth. By means unknown they had perceived and then entered the alternate reality construct wherein lay not only humanity but all living things of the Earth. Seemingly defenceless.

But appearances can be deceiving. In this alternate reality, Thor had entrusted the defence of humanity to most capable hands. The mighty Beta Ray Bill armed with the shield and sword of Odin, led as mighty a group of warrior gods as the major god pantheons of the Multiverse could provide. Pantheon Skyfathers, Gods of War, Thunder Gods, Gods of Strength and among them, and not at all out of

place, stood the warriors three, lady Sif and her brother Heimdall.

As the Star Ravager group heading for Earth came close they felt the full force of skyfather level god blasts from all of the leaders of Earths pantheons. Powerful though this was the Star Ravagers seemed readied for it. What they were not ready for was the powers of creation of a grief stricken father now to be used solely for an act of destruction as the Demiurge lit up the heavens.

The Star Ravagers heading sunward had a simple mission of revenge. To expunge our sun and thereby end our star system. It mattered not whether any sought to bar their path.

Only one person stood in their way.

At that self same moment, other Star Ravagers began arriving at the edge of our star system.

As the Star Ravagers approached even closer to Earth, multiple god blasts from all of the pantheon skyfathers, save the mightiest skyfather of all, seemed to have no effect on the intruders. Despite their having been weakened by the intense cosmic storms visited upon them during their journey inwards through our star system.

It did not bode well for the small blue green world.

Then the grieving father, the Demiurge, let loose. Where once, long, long ago great seeds of creation had been sown upon the Earth now the seeds of unparalleled destruction were visited upon the intruders. If anything, having returned from a higher plane of existence, the Demiurge was even more powerful now than he was then. Somehow too, the Earth mother Gaea added her own power to that of the Demiurge.

A massive coruscating god energy force net descended upon and fully encased two of the Star Ravagers. The force net started slowly contracting in size. There was nothing they could do about it. They were crushed within just as

assuredly as if they had been physical beings. Even energy must have some space in which to exist.

The remaining four Star Ravagers involved in the attack on Earth strove desperately to absorb the inconceivably powerful energies directed at them. To no avail. The energies were too alien, too fundamentally different from anything in their long prior experience. The energy configurations struck back attempting, and nearly succeeding, in drawing out and feeding on the god power of Zeus. But the wrath of the Demiurge was not to be denied. Writhing, contorting, their entire energy flows distorted, the Star Ravagers moved variously between physical and energy and other forms, back and forth, in their attempts to escape the overwhelming torrent of elder god force. Eventually the power of the Demiurge ran its course. The four Star Ravagers yet lived though but barely. Two of them were so weakened as to be now locked in grotesque physical forms and unable to return to their true energy configuration form. These two were no longer able to maintain high Earth orbit and plummeted to the waiting and not so welcoming arms of Mother Earth. Gaea had her revenge and in truth if you knew what the Earth Mother did that day, you would never think of her in the same way again.

The remaining two Star Ravagers now greatly weakened were destroyed by final godblasts from all skyfathers assembled.

Alternate Reality One

In another reality entirely, a place intended to shelter humankind, Beta Ray Bill, brother to Thor in all ways but one, directed the defence of humanity. Here while several of the multiverse skyfathers held their own, war gods and thunder gods from a dozen pantheons had their very skin fried from their bodies and their bones disintegrated to less than dust. Fortunately the Warriors Three, Heimdall, and Lady Sif were not among them.

The two Star Ravagers though, seemed to reserve their most savage energy thrusts for the Korbonite. Only the shield of Odin saved him from certain death that day and even that began to heave and buckle and eventually melt. Staring defeat and death in the face Bill threw aside both the shield and sword of Odin and drew the mighty stormbreaker unto himself. Seeing that the death of the human race and of all other living things of the Earth was imminent.

Bill twirled his awesome hammer, cousin to mighty Mjolnir itself, faster and with more purpose than he ever had before. And with this action he succeeded, as he and his mighty brother had intended, in transporting all six of the still attacking Star Ravagers to another reality. A type of battlefield removal, if you will, but this reality was worse, by far, than the most mind numbing nightmares imaginable. Of all the Star Ravagers that attacked this day these unfortunates faced the most dreadful fate of all.

It was not a place that anyone from our reality ever returned from. Some time ago Bill and Thor had glimpsed it, but barely, from the very edge of our Multiverse.

Bill had held off this manoeuvre, and rightly so, for there had been a very real danger that all combatants, and those who were being protected, might also have suffered the same fate. Praise be to Thor that it did not!

Asgard

The third group of Star Ravagers, the six entities attacking Asgard, were weakened after overcoming Thor's hardened dimensional barriers to the realm eternal. Confronting them lay the All Asgard Destroyer brandishing the Odinsword, certain of the heroes of Earth and Balder the Brave. The god of light, appearing as a small but brilliant star above Asgard City.

Two of the Star Ravagers struck out at the noble one placing him first in time stasis then, for reasons unfathomable, removing his godhood. As a merely mortal man the bravest Asgardian of them all plummeted earthward. The lady Storm caught him in flight and brought him to Earth. While she in turn was struck, Captain America spirited the noble one away and inside Asgard's walls. For whatever temporary protection that might offer.

The Destroyer construct levitated into the Asgardian sky and thrust the Odinsword directly into what appeared to be the maw of one of the entities. Energies vast and unfamiliar crackled first along the length and breadth of the sword and then over the entire body of the huge Destroyer construct. Almost unthinkably the Destroyer dropped the OdinSword. Still Odin's creation was not to be gain said. Though lacking the additional empowerment of the life force of Odin or Thor it waded among the Star Ravagers. Fists lashing out before the construct allowed energies to gather atop the visor of its most feared weapon. Two of the Star Ravagers fell before its disintegration beam.

Two of the remaining Star Ravagers surrounded the Destroyer and moved in to smother it with their body energies moving over it and penetrating its armour. In the process partially melting its legs. The Destroyer crashed to Asgard below but was not yet done.

For a time Earth's heroes seem to mill about as if they were minnows among titans. But they gathered themselves and through a coordinated attack involving Iron Man, the Hulk, the Sentry, the Silver Surfer, Cyclops of the X-men, and the Human Torch they were able to destroy one of the weakened Ravagers. Loki added his own mystical contribution.

At that same moment Hercules, who now counted himself more of Earth than of Olympus, lifted the monstrous Odinsword from the ground. As he prepared to throw it, energies from the very land of Asgard arose unbidden to strengthen and support him. The son of Zeus threw the sword with a force and power that surprised even him. As it sliced into the Star Ravager, totally irreconcilable energies met head on resulting in an implosion of the first order of magnitude. Sword and Ravager were gone.

One more Star Ravager weakened, yet attacking to the last, fell before a combination of anti-energy particle beams from the Destroyer, the power cosmic of the Silver Surfer, Iron Mans repulsor rays and mystical blasts from Loki and Karnilla.

The final Ravager retreated from the field of battle.

A few million miles from The Sun

The final group of Star Ravagers, six in all, moved sunward. Only one entity barred their way.

The architects of the cosmic storms, that had harried the Star Ravagers, had bid them cease. Yet some persisted. In truth Odin, Zeus, Vishnu and yet others such as Dr Strange had unleashed ancient arcane forces that had been contained since even Odin was a boy. The genie was out of the bottle and could not be immediately put back in.

The mighty Thor took full advantage. He gathered into the head of Mjolnir the force of many of the storms still raging about.

To the oncoming Star Ravagers it appeared as if Thor was preparing for another of his troublesome god blasts. Yet it was something even more ferocious.

The mighty Thor did not become as one with his hammer, rather he became one with it. God and hammer a single living entity. The god hammer. An attack only ever used once before. When he turned aside the Celestial sixth host. . The built up energies and power within the god hammer cannot be contained for more than a few moments and thus Thor lashed into the Star Ravagers. Cutting a swathe of destruction across them.

Feeling outmatched the six entities formed into a single unit which only served to hasten their demise. Thor completely disrupted the energies within the configuration casting them out among solar winds, eddies and vortices across the length and breadth of the Multiverse.

At the edge of our star system - Sol

As the conflicts in the inner part of our star system came towards their, not necessarily inevitable, conclusion, reinforcement Star Ravagers entered our star system heading for the inner planets. They found they could not teleport in. The swirling, sworling cosmic storms and ancient mystical forces, the genie that had escaped the bottle, would not allow of it.

Not all of these unleashed forces looked kindly upon men and gods. But, if so, at least men and gods had their place here, whereas these Star Ravager intruders assuredly did not.

As the new Star Ravagers, struggled onwards through the mystical and physical storms and towards the inner system, they were met part way by a recovered Demiurge, the extra-terrestrial form of Gae, Earth Mother, the recovered All Asgard Destroyer, gods of an array of Multiversal pantheons, and all of the skyfathers of the Earth. Not least among them Allfather Thor, bristling to attack and still in his godhammer form.

In an event that will be talked about until times end, and perhaps beyond, the Star Ravagers turned and ran outwards from Sol eventually teleporting away. The unleashed

mystical and physical cosmic storms that had so hindered them finally ceased. The genie back in the bottle of its own volition.

It came to pass that every last one of the valiant and noble souls that perished that day, distant pantheon gods and mortals alike, found their way to their own versions of Valhalla.

Some among them swore that they saw the ghost of great Odin gathering the fallen in and returning them whence they came.

Only the mighty Thor himself knew the truth.

End

What if Thor met up with Star Trek Voyager

Very Deep Space

Several Centuries in the Future

The starship had lost all defensive shields, its warp drive was off line and it lacked even impulse drive. For the moment, thankfully, it had lost its pursuers.

A few hundred meters sun side of the ship lay a remarkable sight. What appeared to be a humanoid form encased in a crystalline structure drifting slowly through space. Light from the distant sun played on the crystalline structure with a prismatic effect. The ships sensors gave a magnified view of the humanoid form. Captain Janeway gasped “what is that?” she asked. “It looks like some sort of Viking warrior or Norse Deity” responded Chakkotay “very well preserved.” Ordered to analyse the humanoid form the ships computer responded: “The entity appears to be the Norse Deity – Thor God of Thunder – last seen on Earth or anywhere else very early in the 21st century.” “The entity is surrounded by some type of stasis field and a considerable volume of ice crystals has formed around that stasis field.”

“Computer” said Janeway “give us a summary of the information in your data banks on Thor Norse God of Thunder.” The computer responded relatively succinctly. “We could have done with one of those when we were up against the Borg” said Belanna Torres. “We still could” replied Janeway.” “What do you think Captain” said Chakkotay. “I think we should bring it, rather I mean him, on board” said Janeway.

With all reasonable precautions taken Voyager locked on to the human form with one of its tractor beams and slowly and gently pulled it into the ships heavily secured main hold and to a well armed reception committee including the ships holographic doctor.

At close quarters the entity (the ships crew still couldn’t quite call it Thor) was quite formidable. Not far short of 2 meters tall it/he was very handsome and with a powerful

physique that would impress even a Klingon. In its perfectly preserved warriors garments it/he seemed all the more imposing. Seven of Nine looked on, uncharacteristically bemused by the sight." "I don't think you will find anything in your Borg data bases about this" smiled Janeway almost laughing.

"Is that what I think it is?" enquired Janeway in a very quiet voice pointing to a short handled hammer held within the entities belt. "Mjolnor the hammer of Thor" said Chakkotay with clear reverence "it must be" "I've read about in the histories - there was no greater weapon known to god, man or alien." Just for a moment there was a quiet in the ships hold as no one, not even the sometimes didactic holograph said anything.

Whether the Voyager knew it or not this was even now still the case. For all that mankind had advanced over several centuries of time there was nothing in Star Fleet nor in the arsenals of the Klingons, the Cardassians or even the Borg or Jem H'Darr to match this great weapon.

"Computer" said Janeway "give us all the information you have on the hammer of Thor." There was surprisingly little information in the computers data banks but what there was seemed most potent and again the ships hold fell briefly silent. Crew members hung on the short references to the hammers alleged ability to transcend space-time - to teleport objects vast distances (including interdimensionally) and even it was once rumoured to facilitate intertemporal travel.

Janeway knew that here was a man or rather a god that could with physical strength alone, tear her ship apart as if it were something less than cardboard. But all the histories showed that the son of Odin had always been a friend of man who would have given his life in defence of the Earth. Surely they had nothing to fear from him?

Attempting to check for life signs the ships doctor quickly realised that no technology at his disposal would allow him

to penetrate the stasis field surrounding the Thunderer. This did not matter a great deal as the life status of the Thunder God was about to be placed beyond doubt.

Awakening the Thunderer rose, first to a sitting position and then to his feet. Most of the ships crew had to look up to him. Sheepishly, feeling foolish and totally inadequate, the ships security personnel trained their phaser and other weaponry on the figure of Thor.

Janeway introduced herself giving a very succinct explanation of who she was, of the Federation, and the present circumstances of Voyager. If the son of Odin was surprised at learning what century he was in he did not show it. Thor asked a few brief questions of Janeway but gave no real indication of his own circumstances. Janeway wondered if Thor had been imprisoned in the stasis block or whether it was of his own making – a protective shield while he slept ?

At that moment Janeway was summoned to the bridge, long range scanners having detected no less than 3 Borg cubes approaching. With Voyager still dead in space and powerful enemies approaching Thor quickly assessed the situation. “You had better show me to your engine room” said Thor with his great hammer, starting to pulsate with power, held just above his shoulder. The implications of his statement were obvious. “This way” said Belanna Torres her mouth watering

In engineering Belanna Torres pointed to the ships warp core. “It’s still off line” she said “if we had just a few more hours” “You don’t need it” said Thor. Placing his hammer in a strategic position Thor announced “the hammer can interface with and supply power to even very advanced and very alien technologies.”

Giving truth to Thor’s statement, engineering, indeed the entire ship, began to hum, almost sing with raw power.

“Shields are up” shouted Chakotay “at 80%, no 100%, no 120% and rising.” “Warp drive or some equivalent thereof is

on line” announced Seven of Nine. “Captain?” said Tom Paris conscious of the approaching Borg and waiting for her signal to depart.

For some reason Janeway hesitated, and the first long range Borg energy projections crashed against Voyagers shields.

“Shield status” yelled Janeway, conscious that she hadn’t actually felt any impact. “Shields now at 200% and rising”

Chakkotay yelled back. Janeway looked at Thor who just seemed to smile slightly. “It is your ship captain” said Thor.

“All right Mr Paris take us out of here.” ordered Janeway.

“Take her to warp 8” said Janeway “I want to lose the Borg.”

But at warp 8 Voyager was unable to escape the Borg cubes all three of which were steadily gaining on her. Janeway

looked at Thor again “all right Mr Paris let’s see what

Voyager can do.” The ship increased it’s already

considerable warp speed “warp 9, 10, 12, 15” came

progressive shouts among the excitement and apprehension on the bridge.

As Voyager increased its warp speed even further the Borg

were left far far behind. The ship levelled out at a warp

speed that was well beyond starfleet experience. In due

course Janeway ordered a return to the more comfortable

speed of warp 6. Seated in Janeway’s ready room Thor

stated simply “I have the power to teleport your entire

Vessel instantly to the Earth - you may want to discuss this

with your crew.”

On his own for a moment in a luxurious cabin provided for

his use, Thor reflected. The stasis field that had surrounded

him while he slept in space was of his own making - a

protection. He saw that the OdinPower and the Rune Magics

had all but deserted him - only a minor element of each

lingered. He had been surprised but not convinced by the

length of his sleep. He detected residual mystical/temporal

energies suggesting he may have been transported into the

future while he slept. Thor also harboured a suspicion he

might be in an alternate reality - though the residual

Odinpower told him otherwise. Once the Voyager and her crew were safely home he needed to return to his own time. Thor looked at mjolnor – only a residual element of it's time travel properties remained. Still that together with the lingering OdinPower and Rune Magics should be sufficient. Janeway assembled the crew and informed them of Thors offer, although their response would presumably be unanimous she asked them all to think on it for a while. Thor was conscious of the length of time Voyagers crew had been gone and of the relative ageing of their loved ones left on Earth. He asked Janeway for a few calculations in this regard. Belanna, Seven of Nine and Janeway herself obliged. The implication was clear, a modest temporal adjustment, courtesy of Mjolnor would smooth the path to the crews reunion with family and friends.

It was characteristic of Thor that he would make such an offer even though it might ultimately jeopardise his attempt to return to his own time. The crew were in awe of Thors great feat in teleporting Voyager to Earth though in truth he was capable of far greater teleportation feats.

Of all the Voyagers crew it was Tuvok that was ultimately most bemused by Thor. He did and redid his various calculations but somehow the power of Thor simply defied all Vulcan logic. "Such a being ought not to exist" concluded Tuvok.

On arrival at Starfleet HQ Thor and the Voyager crew were given a heroes welcome. Thor had travelled into the future before and on the surface all seemed as it should be – if this was an alternate reality the differences were not detectable. Thor even derived some pleasure from the grand tour of star fleet headquarters – smiling as he saw the legendary names of past starfleet captains such as James T Kirk, Jean Luc Picard, Rory Calhoun to name just a few inscribed on the rolls of honour.

Star Fleet Command did not immediately ask for his help but Thor knew the request was coming. They knew what he

had done for Voyager. While Earth itself did not seem in immediate danger Thor knew they fought a desperate and seemingly one sided battle against the unholy combination of both the Dominion and the Borg. He would like to help but there was something he needed to know first.

Taking a short leave of his starfleet hosts Thor twirled his hammer above his head and soared skyward, in just a few minutes the son of Odin was almost half way round the planet. In his wisdom, long ago, Allfather Odin had created a beacon/monument that was quite unique and beyond close duplication. It was a reference point by which any sufficiently advanced entity could determine whether they were in their own reality. Coming in fast and low over the Australian outback Thor slowed at the monument.

Placing his hammer in an indentation in the monument he was given a response that provided an ironclad surety that he was not in an alternate reality. Just before departing Thor noticed a section of the indestructible monument open and unbelievably within it lay one of Odin's two rings of power. Recorded history only spoke of the one ring the fate of which was known, but Odin had kept another and Thor was mightily glad to see it. To Thor it provided further confirmation that he was not in an alternate reality.

Moments later Thor left, the ring of power on his finger, and his spirits high as, in even less time than it took him to come this way, he was back at starfleet command headquarters. He immediately offered the admirals of Starfleet command his full cooperation.

At the mouth of the newly created wormhole on the edge of the border between Federation and Klingon space the Dominion and the Borg vessels poured forth. The Klingons kept a watch on the massed armada but seemed powerless to intervene. A motley assortment of star fleet vessels had been preparing to attack but waited for more substantial Federation reinforcements all teleported to that location by Thor.

The Son of Odin led the attack – in an area of space hundreds of millions of miles across he created a great cosmic storm energies from which struck at every invader simultaneously. The smaller of the Dominion vessels were smashed beyond repair though the larger Dominion dreadnaughts and the Borg Cubes proved highly resistant. Thor also struck at the entrance to the wormhole with blasts of anti-force that served to temporarily close it halting the flow of enemy vessels.

Thor then began to strike at the individual Borg Cubes and Dominion dreadnaughts. Using something akin to his godblast but in heavy pulsating bursts concentrating at first on the densest concentrations of the huge vessels. Moving at great speed and with considerable evasiveness Thor proved a difficult target even for the nimblest Dominion fighters. In any event the ring of power shielded him mightily from the relatively few direct hits upon him. However large numbers of Dominion and Borg vessels managed to move around the edge of Thors continuing storm and began to engage the Federation star ships. The son of Odin was in no doubt this was a contestation he would win but he was concerned at the potentially vast loss of life among Starfleet personnel.

“All Father Odin” cried Thor “if you can hear me now, aid your son now in this battle that we may save the lives of so many men and women of Starfleet.” For what seemed like a very long moment there was no response – how could there possibly be? – Odin was long dead was he not? and surely this was desperation on Thors part.

But then all of space seemed to open and a power that could only be that of Odin answered his son in absolutely unmistakable terms. A vast wave of surging, bludgeoning Asgardian energies struck at the Dominion and the Borg destroying wherever they were. The Asgardian energies continued up through the wormhole and out into the home quadrant of the Borg and the Dominion destroying not only

vessels within the wormhole but also all vessels waiting to enter it. The wormhole itself was also totally destroyed. Then there was quiet – even for interstellar space. Thor cried out “Father, thank you father” – he waited long moments for a reply but none come. After the battle Thor saw that all of the Odinpowers and all of the rune magics had been returned to him. Certainly now there would be no impediment to his returning to his own time.

Neither the Dominion nor the Borg had ever heard of the Asgardian gods Odin and Thor but these were names they were now never likely to forget. Neither the Borg nor the Dominion could ever be described as cowards but in this place near the Klingon border they received a demonstration of unmistakably superior force that would remain with them always – a defeat so thorough that no Dominion historian could ever re-write it.

A godless invader had been stopped by the power of two true gods.

The son of Odin did not tarry at Starfleet Command – but he left them with one great legacy – Odin’s ring of power was ensconced within the engineering section of the Federation’s very latest and most powerful starship – the latest in a long line of vessels with the proud name of Enterprise.

Attack on the All Place

The All Place

There is no where in all of the Multiverse even remotely comparable to the All Place.

If you can imagine a colossal city far greater, far vaster than any of the great cities of the Tolden or the Brell before them. A city viewed from space that is brighter than any star and exists in the void between two of the larger galaxies.

A super city in which every city block represents one of the realities of our Multiverse. And where you can move from one reality to another just as easily as you can walk to the next street in a city on Earth.

A city which exists, in some form, in all the realities.

Of course not just anyone may visit this place.

*

The approach of evils ultimate form was not capable of physical detection.

It came not from within the Multiverse but outside of it. From the endless, truly limitless, truly empty ethereal sea. A place of eternal darkness with not so much as a candlepower of light across all of its limitless extremities.

Yet for all that, the ultimate evil that now moved through the ethereal sea was darker still.

An attack without precedent, an attack on the All Place itself, was imminent.

An attack based on surprise, stealth, and utterly devastating power.

Yet for all of its stealth, all of its undetectability, the custodians of the All Place, the great trans Galactic super power empire of the Tolden, knew the attack was coming and they stepped aside.

This was not cowardice, the Tolden are not cowards, but they are only custodians of the All Place. Its true defenders are the champions, the mightiest warriors of each of the realities that it embraces.

So it was that the ultimate evil, the darkness that emerged from the ethereal sea, found itself driven back into the darkness by the greatest warrior of each reality. The energy and power bursting forth from a thousand hammers and more held high.

Did you not know it?

The Galactus's of this Multiverse, the Celestials may come and go, but there is one immutable fact amid all the realities. In every single reality the greatest champion, the mightiest warrior is an incarnation of the mighty Thor, Lord of Thunder, son of Odin.

It is said that the ethereal sea is no longer dark but alight with the light, energy and power output from sustained bursts of more than a thousand hammers of Thor.

Whether that is true or not I can tell you that there has never been another attack on the All Place.

End

When the Thunder Returns

Sonod was unable to remember anything from more than two cycles ago.

It was never spoken of but instinctively he knew he was not of those whom he now lived among. Still he had come to know companionship, happiness of a sort, and even love among them. Wherever his true roots lay he knew his present companions were a kindred race. Warriors that had more recently also turned to mining, forestry and agriculture the Norze were the dominant race on the large resource rich world of Gardas.

When first he came among them his great strength was immediately apparent. Whether in battle against beasts or men, mining ores, or felling great trees the strength of Sonod became legendary. It was generally thought that there was no physical task beyond him.

When the star spanning Overlords came Sonod was mining far below ground and in a distant location. It was quite some time before runners could bring him news of the invasion.

By then the Overlords had eliminated all opposition and begun to establish themselves. Several large star ships lay in orbit and strategically positioned and imposing military bases were under construction. There is only so much that a semi-feudal race can do against star spanning technology – numbers, courage, cunning and local knowledge notwithstanding.

Sonod's own modest village and those nearby had been totally destroyed. Almost all those in the village at the time had been killed. And within sight of the village a few miles distant a sprawling, ugly, Overlord base was under construction. On seeing the destruction of the only place he could remember as home the fury welled deep within Sonod.

Above him a storm gathered and although he could not control it he knew instinctively that it was of his making. In mere moments the storm spread planet wide and to the outer limits of the planetary atmosphere. The darkening sky took on a violet hue and the cascading lightning seemed more electric blue than intense white.

Although uncontrolled the storm seemed, as if with an intelligence of it's own, to seek out the Overlord invaders while leaving the planet's indigenous persons unscathed. Growing still further in intensity the storm reached beyond the planet's atmospheric limits forcing the Overlord star ships to break orbit. Under the storms onslaught all Overlord communications between themselves ceased. While the storm raged Sonod watched transfixed until, with his heart almost overloaded with anger, his attention turned to the nearby Overlord base. With a single leap he covered the several intervening miles to the base perimeter.

Mighty balled fists moving with piston like efficiency and speed smashed against the Overlord base force shields which soon crumbled under the assault. Entering the base Sonod's fists struck with deadly power and accuracy smashing the alien buildings and huge unfathomable machineries. Overlord troopers struck back with hand held and fixed mount energy projectors and rapid fire high explosive projectile weapons. Sonod hurled weighty items of machinery weighing hundreds perhaps even thousands of tons at his attackers and then launched himself among the survivors fists flailing. In a remarkably short period of time this particular Overlord base was subdued nor, with the storm, could the Overlords send reinforcements.

At that moment one of his home villagers approached him. It was the "old one" the first elder of the village whom he had come to see almost as a father. "Come with me now Sonod" said the elder gently "there is something I should have shown you soon after you first came among us." With that Sonod took the old one in his arms and, variously

running at great speed across the ground and periodically taking huge bounds through the air, followed the elders directions. In short order they arrived in a deep valley and entered a sizeable crater at almost the lowest point in the valley. A labyrinth of caverns led off from the base of the crater.

In the furthest cavern among the labyrinth lay an object that Sonod did not recognise though he could sense its power, sense that it was an artefact of true greatness. An impressive hammer, short of handle with a largish head and a leather thong attached. Still it meant nothing to him. At that moment the hammer seemed almost to sing as it came alive flying through the cavern into Sonod's waiting hands. He grasped the handle firmly, hefted it then tentatively raised it high above his head as slowly an awareness came upon him as to his and the hammers true nature and origins.

It took a Sonod a little time to come to terms with his new found knowledge. The man known widely among the tribes of the Norze race as Sonod the strong was in fact Thor of Asgard the greatest warrior that ever walked this or any other planet. His hammer mighty Mjolnor was the greatest weapon ever known to man, god, cosmic entity or abstract being. As Thor and the old one left the caverns the storm above continued unabated .

Still a little tentative Thor slowly and deliberately raised his hammer and commanded the storm to cease. And of course it did so and on the instant.

As the memories flooded in Thor of Asgard saw that he retained only a small residual element of both the OdinPower and the separate Rune Magics. He saw also that following his defeat of "those who live above in shadow" and during his long sleep most of the OdinPower and Rune Magics had been taken from him. In all his wisdom Allfather Odin acting from some inconceivably remote plane of existence had decided that no one should take advantage of

Thor in this condition and had hidden him by placing him with a kindred race at the other side of the Universe. With the storm ceasing the Overlord star ships returned to planetary orbit and the invaders went about there business of subjugation. Thor, hammer in hand, launched massive energy assaults, one at a time, against the orbiting star ships of the Overlords. Only the Overlord mother ship offered appreciable resistance before escaping by moving swiftly away into hyperspace. All other star ships were disintegrated.

Well armed and armoured considerable Overlord ground forces supported by thousands of attack fighters gathered for an assault on Thor. The Overlords are a formidable technological race and are not predisposed to hasty retreats. This made it all the more surprising when the forces converging on Thor suddenly dissipated moving as efficiently as possible to return to the huge mother ship which had re-emerged from hyperspace.

Thor watched on with growing surprise as, with extreme efficiency, every last one of the Overlords implosively re-embarked on the mother ship which moved away into hyperspace with embarrassing haste. Thor knew he was not the cause of this as he sensed the Overlords had been prepared to fight him to their last entity.

Twirling his hammer at fantastic speed the son of Odin overcame the escape velocity of Gardas and moved beyond planetary confines. There he saw a sight to give pause even to the son of Odin and Gaea. Coming in at considerable speed toward Gardas and dressed seemingly like a warlord was the green behemoth known only as the Hulk. Some distance behind the speeding Hulk was the huge former of the devourer of worlds the great Galactus himself.

Thor could see what was patently obvious, that something unimaginable had happened. The Hulk had become a herald of Galactus and granted the power cosmic to add his already prodigious strength. Still adjusting to the reality that

he was not Sonod but Thor of Asgard the son of Odin was stunned at such a turn of events. The Hulk sped planet ward at a velocity one would more usually associate with the Silver Surfer. Now imbued with the power cosmic the new herald of Galactus saw Thor and turned in his direction. Galactus looked on with surprise and mild interest. While he bore the son of Odin no ill will, the hunger was upon him and he would brook of no interference in his feeding. Sensing that Thor held only vestigial elements of the OdinPower and rune magics Galactus concluded the Asgardian would be no match for a highly intelligent enraged Hulk that now possessed the power cosmic in abundance. Galactus waited and watched.

In the mere moments available to him before the Hulk's arrival Thor drew on the vestiges of the rune magics still available to him. In this form he could not achieve the near omniscience of Rune Thor. Still he was able to broadly discern the unfortunate events that finally left the Hulk with no choice other than to agree to serve as a most unlikely herald for the world devourer. The unquenchable anger and righteous wrath that had led to WW Hulk, his small band and subsequent allies laying bare the Earth. An Earth far too weak to countenance resistance when subsequently the great Galactus arrived. Though all the death and destruction had still not quelled the anger of the Hulk something deep within him could not abide the end of humanity . His choice was simple serve Galactus and the mighty one would spare the Earth.

As the Hulk came closer his speed increased and Thor saw the behemoth was on collision course for him. He saw also that the Hulk possessed some kind of battle armour and a fearsome axe appropriate to the behemoth's size. Twirling his hammer at a speed that defied description Thor threw it with all the great strength that his good right arm would allow directly at the Hulk. Coruscating with waves of

bludgeoning Asgardian energies hammer and anger crazed cosmic powered axe wielding Hulk met head on.

At that precise moment that hammer and behemoth met time momentarily froze about them. As this happened Galactus noticed an unwelcome development. A barely discernable but very large audio-visual image of Allfather Odin appeared against the background of the stars. The Allfather was somehow establishing a tenuous link between his and our own plane of existence and was observing the struggle between Thor and the Hulk.

Time was frozen locally just before the inevitable collision of the hammer of Thor and the power cosmic WW Hulk.

Galactus looked to the visual apparition of Odin assuming the Allfather had been responsible for this event. But the Odin visual image said nothing. As suddenly and inexplicably as time in the vicinity of WW Hulk was frozen, it became unfrozen.

What happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable object ? Sometimes the irresistible force proves just a little less than irresistible while the immovable object moves slightly. Just before mjolnor's impact WW Hulk twisted slightly raising his cosmic powered axe with the clear intent of cleaving mjolnor apart. Although moving with unnerving speed the Hulk missed and mjolnor struck a glancing blow against his shoulder. It may be that the power cosmic afforded the Hulk some protection but still the battle armour on his shoulder was smashed and he started to free fall. Mjolnor returned to it's masters hand but not without a slight wobble and the Hulk quickly regained flight.

Some might think that the odds of battling potentially both Galactus and a WW Hulk possessed of the power cosmic would be too great for Thor and he would be best served by departing the battlefield. Anyone who might think this knows nothing of the true nature of the son of Odin. For some two cycles now, as defined by planetary orbits about the Gardas sun, Thor lived and loved among the indigenous

people of Gardas. If every Celestial in the Multiverse were to converge on Gardas at that moment the son of Odin would assuredly rise up to meet them with nobility, courage and honour.

Realizing that Galactus was very weak from hunger Thor sought to teleport the Hulk from the battlefield. The son of Odin reasoned that with the Hulk removed he might be able to defeat or drive off the world devourer, much as he had done years ago. Especially as he still held small residual elements of the Odinpower and Rune magics. Thors attempt at battlefield removal failed. Whether this was through the direct intervention of Galactus or whether the Hulk in this form could resist battlefield removal was unclear.

From a short distance WW Hulk launched quite massive waves of the power cosmic at Thor. It was most strange thought Thor to see the behemoth fighting in this manner. Twirling his hammer Thor created a spherical force shield completely encasing himself and, just barely, protecting him from the Hulk's assault. The power cosmic seemed to dance about Thor's force field for some time before finally abating. "Galactus has given him more power cosmic than any previous Herald" thought Thor "it may be something the world devourer will live to regret."

Thor responded with successive bolts of anti-force but the Hulk just came on against them. It was plain to see that the green titan considered fighting at a distance distasteful and closed on the Asgardian. Rays from the sun of Gardas glinted off the Hulk's axe which appeared disturbingly sharp. Swinging it with surprising skill and not so surprising power it seemed WW Hulk would be satisfied with nothing less than Thors decapitation. The Odinson parried the Hulk's swings with mjolnor, once, twice, three times. Thor then took to the offensive reigning savage blows which the Hulk parried with his axe.

Thor's entire body and his hammer coruscated with Asgardian energies just as the Hulk's body and axe

coruscated with the power cosmic. As the struggle continued the Hulks axe – splendid weapon though it was – began to break apart – successive blows from mjolnor had undone it. There are many fine weapons in the Multiverse – but ultimately there is only one hammer of thor.

Disgusted with his axe's failure the Hulk tossed it aside and closed again on Thor. "I shall finish this with my fists" said the Hulk "as has always been my way in the past." Thor secured mjolnor in his belt. "So be it, let us fight as we did then." The Hulk launched himself at Thor with near devastating speed but somehow Thor was even quicker hitting the behemoth with a double fisted blow in the Hulk's back that sent the green titan reeling. The Hulk responded with a massive blow to Thors head that that the Odinson failed to block and that sent him tumbling end over end through space.

The purely physical close quarter battle seemed to go on for ever with neither Thor nor the Hulk gaining the upper hand and with neither giving any quarter. Almost without realizing it Thor drew on the residual OdinPower/Rune Magic to mystically enhance his strength and the Hulk did likewise drawing on the Power Cosmic. Still could neither gain a decisive advantage over the other. Thor pondered on the Hulk's ever increasing rage. While this was the way of the Hulk, still something was not right about it – he speculated that Galactus might in some manner be manipulating the Hulk's rage. It would be well within the devourer's capability to do so.

The Hulk grew increasingly frustrated with the lack of an outcome to the struggle. With his strength still seemingly growing through his ever increasing rage the behemoth grabbed Thor from behind in a massive bear hug. Thor Odinson strained almost to the limit to break free of that awesome grip the veins in his arms stood out, his muscles bulged, his teeth clenched. He started to feel the warriors madness come upon him and he resisted it. This would not

be the answer, any temporary strength advantage he might acquire would be outweighed by the loss of intelligent fighting skill. At that moment Thor burst free from the Hulk's inconceivably powerful grip. The Hulk cried out in danger and dismay.

Fortunately the continuing battle did not descend to the planet Gardas below. If it had Thor and the Hulk might well have destroyed the planet. This did not matter to Galactus as he intended to consume the planet anyway. However by some method Odin had kept Thor and the Hulk at a distance from Gardas preventing them from wreaking havoc below. As the battle continued still further Galactus began to lose patience and descended to Gardas where he started to set up his consumption machineries. This added new urgency to Thors struggle with the Hulk. Thor and the Hulk came together again hands gripped at each others throats. Throughout the length and breadth of their powerful forms their bodies hummed with power and glowed with energies Asgardian, cosmic and other. There was a very real sense that their battle was leading to a climax, that here in just a few moments one of these great beings would perish at the hand of the other.

And then, at that very moment, local time around Thor and the Hulk froze again

Galactus busy preparing his machineries seemed not to notice. What he did not and could not fail to notice just a few moments later was a vastly powerful telepathic communication literally booming in his head. Odin, or at least that which was once Odin, had at last chosen to speak. The huge visual image of the entity which was once Odin peered down directly at Galactus as it's powerful telepathic communication bored into his mind. There could be no blocking it out. " I ask you to spare the world of Gardas great Galactus" said the entity " If you grant me this I shall supply you with the energies you need to assuage your

immediate hunger !” “He who was once my son has formed a deep attachment to that world and will give his life for it.”

“ What of my herald, you who were once Odin ?” asked Galactus.

“I will not let either Thor or the Hulk perish” said the entity “when it becomes clear that one of them is about to triumph I shall end the contestation.” “As could I” responded Galactus. “I agree to your terms Odin” said Galactus” “ provided only that I keep my herald .”

At that moment Odin unfroze time around Thor and the Hulk and their battle continued. Still it showed no sign of abating, no sign of either combatant gaining a clear upper hand. As the battle continued the visual image of Odin gave way to an actual physical presence. That which was once Odin made the great journey from his higher plane of existence. The entity was huge and appeared to consist entirely of a completely unknown and probably unknowable form of energy.

Galactus looked on wondering how much of the Allfather, if anything at all, remained in the entity’s intelligence - certainly enough to be concerned about Thor.

Dwarfing the great Galactus the entity began to transfer energies to the titan. Although beyond anything in his vast experience Galactus saw that the energies were not incompatible with the power cosmic. Galactus bathed in the energies supplied to him and quite quickly his ravenous hunger was more than satiated.

As the energy transfer from the entity to Galactus came to an end, Thor began finally to have doubts about the outcome of his struggle with the Hulk beginning to fear that at some point his own prodigious strength might fail him. At that moment Thor sensed a slight weakening in the Hulk’s grip. It seemed as if the monsters anger had begun to subside and with it an attendant drop in his almost limitless strength. While exercising caution Thor also slightly reduced the pressure in his own grip while the Hulk’s grip weakened

still further. Slowly the unbelievable happened as all the bitter anger seemed to flow out of the Hulk and he became calm almost docile. Thor released his grip on the behemoth. "It is over for now" said the Hulk "the anger has left me and I have no quarrel with you Thor, you were not one of those that sent me away." "Are you all right Hulk" asked Thor genuinely concerned "I know what has befallen you but never did I think to see you as a herald of the devourer of worlds?" "If you know what has transpired then you know there is nothing more for me on Earth" said the Hulk "with Galactus at least the anger abates at times - I will remain with him for a while, at least."

As Galactus and the Hulk departed that which was once Odin remained for a while. "I took most of the Odinpowers and rune magics from you while you slept" said Odin "as they were capable of being taken from you by other powers of sufficient magnitude and you did not need them. I now return them to you as I believe you are ready to use them again."

"What of the Hulk?" said Thor "what will become of him? Sadly Thor could not bring himself to call this entity father even though it had his best interests at heart and some part of Odin still seemed to be present. The entity had come across the abyss for him."

"One such as he will remain with Galactus only as long as he chooses" said the entity "when he chooses to leave even Galactus will not be able to prevent it" "I registered your thoughts and agree with you that Galactus was unwise to give the Hulk so much of the cosmic power."

"Is Galactus manipulating the Hulk's anger?" asked Thor. "The anger is almost unquenchable" said the entity "but Galactus calms him much of the time." "Only when another world must be consumed does Galactus allow the anger to return - the Hulk is well aware of this and the arrangement suits him for the moment"

“ Did the Hulk’s anger run it’s course through our battle or did Galactus or you intervene to calm him ?” asked Thor. For a while the entity remained silent, then “ I do not know” it said “I did not intervene because the outcome of the battle remained unclear.”

“Then even now” said Thor “we still do not know which of us is the stronger ?”

“Does it really matter ?” enquired the entity and seemed almost to smile if a 1,000 feet long cloud of energy can actually smile. With that the pure energy entity that had once been all father to an entire race of gods and whose name had been revered throughout the Multiverse took his leave from for the last time from of our plane of existence. Thors last memory of that which had once been Odin was a friendly wave from a visual image of Odin as he had been in his very prime and at the height of his power.

End

The Might of Magni

It came to pass that Prince Magni had become utterly bored with his supposedly idyllic existence in New Asgard.

The perfection and harmony that Lord Thor had achieved on Earth and it's Moon, on the Martian Colony, on Continental Asgard and some other more recent acquisitions had left Magni with no challenges.

Lord Thor and the forces supporting his reign had become so powerful that there was in effect no conceivable threat to his present dominions from any source whatsoever. The very name of Lord Thor was spoken of with total respect in all corners of our Universe. This is not to say though, that there were those prepared to do his offspring harm should such an opportunity arise.

Thus it was that with Thor's blessing Magni decided to venture out into the larger cosmos in search of knowledge and adventure (as both his father and his grandfather as younger men had once done). There was also a more practical side to this as Lord Thor had charged Magni, whilst enjoying himself, to also be on the look-out for potential planetary systems that might one day be colonised by those of Earth/Asgard.

Thor had viewed a number of potential systems and even teleported there for a brief look but there had not been time for any detailed type of survey.

Magni would not however be alone. Accompanying him in a great Viking longboat, named the Lady Sif, would be Thialfi with whom Magni had established a great friendship and a full dozen of New Asgard's young and hardy warriors.

The resemblance between the Lady Sif and a Viking Longboat of old ended at the purely appearances level. The great ship was force field protected against the extremes of the cosmos and contained mystically an unlimited supply of breathable air. It was also capable of both interdimensional travel and speeds far beyond that of light. Furthermore every one of the accompanying warriors had a special power of some sort. Thialfi had his great speed and Thiemden – son of Heimdall had his father's vast sight, sound and other sensory capabilities. Among Magni's other companions was a healer and at least one other warrior able to teleport interdimensionally. Yet others had a variety of mystic capabilities offensive and defensive. As a still further precaution the inert Destroyer armour had been taken along, with a view to its being used by Thialfi if necessary.

Prince Magni was essentially a physical person relying on his great strength and durability (this was probably greater than that of almost any other mystically unassisted purely physical being anywhere in the Multiverse). Still his mother had chosen to teach him some of her mystic ways. Also he had finally taken possession of the great hammer of Thor, now renamed the hammer of Magni. Thor had returned the time travel properties of the great hammer and strengthened its capacity to absorb and retain energy such that a godblast from Magni would be far greater than Thor's godblast which millennia ago once forced the retreat of the great Galactus and even gave pause to Mighty Exitar. One further addition had been made - through the hammer - Magni could if necessary mystically augment both his size and strength.

Why this last enchantment was added was most curious, few if any beings could physically match Magni's strength and it seemed in some ways like overkill, yet perhaps Lord

Thor in his great wisdom had his reasons.

In short Magni and his companions seemed generally well equipped to deal with almost anything they might face out in the cosmos.

Furthermore Magni would generally be under observation (especially from his mother the Enchantress), from New Asgard, though Lord Thor had decided that he would only ever intervene if his son faced a threat sufficient to seriously endanger his life. For any lesser threats Prince Magni would have to rely on the resources at his immediate disposal.

Thus did Magni and his comrades set forth teleporting close to a little known and distant Galaxy then allowing Heimdall's son to chart a course for the first of the favourable worlds that Lord Thor had detected.

Over the coming days, weeks and months Prince Magni and his band moved from one seemingly Earth like world to another. Each world seeming even more verdant than the last. Yet in truth each had been seeded with something that would set in place a process of decay that would eventually reduce the world to lifelessness (a sort of reverse terraforming). At first Magni had thought this just some accident of nature, but a pattern began to emerge – a malevolent intelligence had almost certainly been at work here.

Magni had also been supplied with the means to audio-visually contact new Asgard should the circumstances warrant and after the first few visits to the Earth like worlds, he reported his early findings back to Lord Thor. Thor was concerned but at this point not overly so.

As time progressed both Thor and Amora followed their

offspring's progress less regularly, Thor because of pressing matters of State and Amora because of "dalliances" behind Lord Thors back.

At the point where it became obvious that there was a clear pattern of malevolence to the long term lifelessness seeding of these worlds Prince Magni sought again to contact New Asgard and report - to his great surprise he was unable to do so. He then decided to use his hammers teleportation capabilities to return to Asgard and report directly. To his even greater surprise the hammer failed him as did the teleportation capabilities of the Lady Sif longboat and one of his companions who also had this capability.

For the time being and for whatever reason Magni and his companions were limited to the approx 3 X light speed capability of the Lady Sif. Magni did not as yet propose to test his hammers time travel capabilities. While this was clearly cause for great concern, still Magni knew that Lord Thor watched over him from Asgard and that ultimately his father would intervene, perhaps even coming here himself.

Thus Magni's explorations continued. It was during a respite on yet another of these "infected" Earth like worlds that the attack came. Magni had briefly moved away from his comrades in a particularly idyllic waterfall setting to ponder their future actions when out of a dimensional portal his comrades experienced a surprise attack from a fearsome assemblage of some of the Universes most malevolent characters. This included the former heralds of Galactus - Terrax and Morg, Perrikus of the Dark Gods and other equally fearsome yet unknown entities.

With Magni temporarily absent Thor's companions were overwhelmed and left either slain or severely injured, all except for Thialfi who entered the Destroyer armour and

completed disintegrated Terrax, Perrikus and most of the other attackers.

As Magni came running he saw the Thialfi Destroyer engaging a Morg (apparently with waters of life) who had been on the edge of the Destroyers visor disintegration blast. A vicious leer appeared on Morg's face as he ignored the Thialfi Destroyer and moved to engage Magni. For whatever reason Morg had assumed that Magni was of comparable strength and capabilities to the Thor before Odin's death.

What a surprise Morg received when as he closed with Magni and discovered Magni's true strength and durability. Desirous of a quick victory Magni knocked Morg aside as if he were a puppet and then completely destroyed him with a very short sharp low intensity "godblast".

As Magni and the Thialfi Destroyer surveyed the scene of carnage and looked to see what could be done for their wounded comrades- they heard suddenly the most fearsome and bone chilling laughter they had ever known. Accompanying the Morg/Terrax/Perrikus group had been the son of Tyrant. Not only the most fearsome looking entity imaginable but one bent on revenge for Lord Thor's destruction of his father.

By now the energies had again built up around the Thialfi/Destroyer's visor and realising that this was not an entity to be toyed with Prince Magni and the Thialfi Destroyer attacked the sone of Tyrant in Unison. The Thialfi Destroyer with a disintegrator beam and Magni with a much more powerful godblast. For all his fearsomeness the son of Tyrant was destroyed in a mere moment. Even his father would have been unlikely to survive such an assault.

Then Prince Magni and Thialfi attended to their wounded (the healer among them had not been too badly injured and was assisting). Magni paused to think who could have been behind these attacks, was even the son of Tyrant just the agent of a greater force ?. Something powerful enough to prevent his communication with and teleportation back to New Asgard had been at work. It did seem likely that even the son of Tyrant had this power.

As the weary band gathered itself, the true architect of their misfortunes became evident, they all looked to the sky to see levitating before them a huge Exitar class Celestial. As the entire Celestial race had some years ago departed for their ancestral home in a distant dimension, this entity had to be some kind of rogue Celestial back for revenge on the humiliation of his race by Lord Thor just as the son of Tyrant had sought revenge.

In truth as the Celestials tended to specialise – Arishem the Judge, Ziran the Tester, Exitar the Exterminator, this rogue Celestial was actually Leandarr the Destroyer – the very physically strongest of all the Celestial race. What a test indeed for great Magni !

Magni knew immediately what he had to do and using his hammers powers mystically increased his size to the 10,000 feet of an Exitar Class Celestial.

This would truly be the physical clash of titans to end all physical clashes of titans.

Levitating to meet Leandarr the two titans moved out into space and engaged in the greatest “slugfest” ever seen and indeed initially the honours seemed roughly even as every huge planet shattering blow landed.

Whether or not Prince Magni could have beaten the rogue Celestial at this present strength level became however somewhat problematic. In looking back at his comrades Magni found his rage grow and he entered a true state of “warrior’s madness”. At this strength level there was nothing to gainsay him and he began to pummel the Exitar Class rogue Celestial with increasing savagery. Indeed it was no longer a contest as great Magni pummelled Leandarr into silence and submission. Still the pummelling continued – the Celestial armour was smashed into fragments and still Magni kept pummelling.

Finally as he came out of the warrior’s madness Magni took stock and indeed there was nothing left of the rogue Celestial than an oozing mass of jelly.

Almost (though not completely) ashamed of his actions Magni returned to his normal 6 feet 10 inches and to his comrades and contacted Asgard to report. Lord Thor immediately joined them and immediately reversed the effects of the seeds of eventual lifelessness sowed by the rogue Celestial.

In years to come these verdant worlds in this distant Galaxy would make excellent colonies for the Earth’s continuing expanding population.

End

In Search of Odin

Mighty Olympus lay shattered and burning. Hercules knelt from exhaustion, hands covering his now thoroughly unrecognizable face. No Olympian maiden would find anything attractive now in this bloodied and bowed figure. Zeus himself lay motionless – the axe of Desaak buried deep in his chest. Something in the mystical make up of the axe had prevented Zeus from healing himself. The god slayer had drunk deeply of the god power of the skyfather and there had much to drink.

Ares lay dead nearby, divested of all godly energies; he seemed little more than a husk. The god of war had been easier to defeat than Hercules. No doubt something to do with the mixed parentage of the lion of Olympus. Some among the Olympian warriors had actually fled the carnage, but this was no surprise to the god hater.

Of all who might have aided Olympus only the alien Thor substitute Beta Ray Bill had come. Bill's origins did not matter to Desaak. He was in the possession of the power of gods making him a natural enemy. Still Bill had fought a surprisingly stubborn rearguard action enabling many non combatants to flee the fallen city. He had proved more resistant than most of the gods of Olympus. No doubt his alien origins contributed to this.

Desaak stood above Hercules. "Where is your friend now?" he asked exultantly "where is the son of Odin when Olympus needs him most?" Desaak's hard expression gave way to the very cruellest smile of triumph. Then the god-slayer awoke. Even by his standards it was a magnificent dream. A dream that would one day become reality. But for now another matter claimed his attention.

On Earth the mighty Thor continued to find and re-awaken his fellow Asgardians. Slowly refilling the lonely rooms and halls of Asgard. The son of Odin had retained some

knowledge of the rune magic and also the barest thread of that which was once known as the Odinpowers. As if it was somehow a final tenuous link to his father.

Taking a respite from his searches Thor drew Heimdall aside.

"I can still sense him" said Thor. "Whether he is free and hale and hearty or a prisoner subject to great deprivations I cannot tell but my father still lives" "I cannot now spare the time to search him out" continued the Thunderer "but I would have you do so." Thor endowed Heimdall with the little Odinpowers that was left and also Sif's sword with its well known interdimensional teleportation capabilities. It was Thor's belief that the combination of Heimdall's vast sensory capabilities and the residual Odinpowers would assist him in locating Odin. Through his sister's sword and the residual Odinpowers, transportation should not pose a difficulty for Heimdall. The rune magic provided just one clue. Heimdall's search should begin with the pantheon known as the Aesir or sometimes as the wisdom gods, respected for that attribute among all the pantheons.

"You said that Odin was dead" flashed Deshaak as his powerful hand began to crush Orikal's windpipe. "I told Thor that I could not detect his father on any plane of existence" responded the seer "which need not be the same thing." "I see that you did not go the way of other things of the Asgardian plane" sneered the god slayer. "I am not a native of Asgard" replied Orikal "some seem to forget this given the length of time that I was held captive by Geirrod's flames."

"I can sense him" said Deshaak, after a pause "I sense the Allfather." "What of that?" said Orikal "even if he lives, he is almost certainly beyond your reach, why trouble yourself?"

"We are not discussing a mere godling here" continued Orikal "Odin the Almighty was the most powerful skyfather among all of the Multiverse's pantheons - leave well enough alone!" "You will tell me what you know seer" said Deshaak

“or I will crush the life from you, and do not presume that I am alone in this venture!”

Heimdall arrived in the remote pocket dimension of the Aalyetians without difficulty but was unprepared for the sight that filled his eyes. The total annihilation of the modest city state of this most gentle of pantheons. The entire city was a burned out cinder with not so much as a single building surviving. A few bodies totally drained of god energies lay scattered among the charred ruins of a city whose magnificent architecture once surpassed both Asgard and Olympus. The handful of bodily remains each grotesquely shrunk did not reflect the total population of the wisdom gods. The destruction here was no vainglorious dream of Desaak but cold hard reality.

“It is a truly saddening sight old friend” came the voice “I think we both know who the author of this destruction must have been.” “Bill” exclaimed Heimdall rejoicing at the sight of one of Asgard’s most powerful and dearest friends. “What are you doing here Bill?” enquired the former guardian of the rainbow bridge. “I seek the same goal as you noble Heimdall” responded Beta Ray Bill.

The two looked on at the surely unprovoked destruction that lay before them. Bill thought to himself that it could hardly have been any worse if the great Galactus had come this way. “Does even Desaak have the power to destroy an entire pantheon?” enquired Heimdall. “I think you will find he has the backing of at least one other who has reason to hate the gods even more” replied Bill “else he would not have come on a fools errand.” “Slayer of gods he may be but even Desaak knows he is no match for the Allfather.” Heimdall nodded thoughtfully but Bill did not elaborate. Heimdall then drew on the remnants of the Odinpower to enhance his already vast sensory powers. The god who could both hear and see the movement of a butterfly’s wings worlds away now found that his sight could now

pierce the dimensional veils to follow even the very faintest interdimensional trail.

Desaak had extracted at least some of the information that he had sought from the Aalyetian gods. Information crucial to his next step in the search for Odin and it did not matter to him overmuch who might come across his handiwork after the event. Others though had gone to great pains to ensure his path could not be followed. Still whoever they might be, they did not reckon on the Odinpower boosted senses of Heimdall.

The faint interdimensional trail detected by Heimdall lead to a vastly distant dimension.

"I fear we will need all of our combined resources to follow this trail" said Heimdall. "the interdimensional jump is beyond even your experience Bill." The sight of Beta Ray Bill twirling mighty Stormbreaker and Heimdall wielding Sif's sword in unison whilst drawing again on the precious Odinpower would have been quite impressive to behold. If anyone had been watching.

So distant was their interdimensional jump that it took Heimdall and Beta Ray Bill a time to reach their destination. They had even considered breaking it into several separate teleports. Heimdall had to insulate himself against the onrushing sensations as they moved through myriad dimensions. "I can feel something assisting us Bill" said Heimdall "helping us make the jump"

"Gods of wisdom indeed" sneered Desaak "the Aaleytians were not so wise as to be able to avoid their own destruction." "Was it really necessary to completely destroy them?" asked one of his companions "they gave you the information you sought, at least in part" "Your actions will enrage many of the god pantheons" continued the companion "that might not otherwise have concerned themselves with us."

One of Desaak's companions was the single entity that comprised the aggregation of all of the dark gods even

Cellestion Zheillia (though companion may be a poor choice of words). A more unlikely combination and inherently unstable relationship probably did not exist. Desaak hater of gods and the dark gods' haters of everything, especially other gods. Yet they had cooperated so far in the great venture. Perhaps their other companion had subtly manipulated them holding them together at least as long as it suited her/him. However conflict constantly threatened to break out.

Odin had indeed "died" as mortals and even some gods understood the term. Yet distant pantheons, with an interest in such matters, had moved to recreate him. Then, in time, as Lord Thor had thwarted the plans of "those who live above in shadow" and taken his long respite – the Allfather had reclaimed most of the Odinpower. It should never be thought, however, that Odin was nothing without the Odinpower – far from it. The Odinpower is only an aspect of Odin, possibly one upon which he had at times been over reliant. During its absence other aspects of Odin's nature came to the fore.

After his "recreation" Odin had stayed for a time as the guest of the gentle Aaleyrians. Though they were not known as the gods of wisdom without good reason, still they had learned from him as he had from them. Wherever he now was the former Lord of Asgard would no doubt be greatly angered by their demise. After his time with the Aaleyrians passed, Odin moved among other distant pantheons. He was respected and his knowledge sought wherever he went. Until the time came to move on.

Orikal did not lie to mighty Thor. At the time when Thor had asked him Orikal could not in truth detect Odin on any plane of existence. When Orikal later became aware of Odin's distant existence he simply chose, for reasons best known to himself, not to divulge this information to anyone.

On reaching the very end of the barely perceptible interdimensional trail left by Desaak and others Beta Ray

Bill and Heimdall chose to take stock of their unusual environment. It was beyond anything that either had experienced. Dormammu's dark realm was cosy by comparison. Heimdall used the full extent of his sensory capabilities backed by every ounce of the residual Odinpowers he could gather. At first he was unable to detect either Deshaak or more importantly any direct trace of Odin. Then he sensed the residual Odinpowers growing within him. "Perhaps it is Odin's indirect way of assisting us" thought Bill.

In a dimension as far removed from our own as it was possible to be, an invigorated Heimdall felt the Odinpowers build within him. He rejoiced in it, taking it as a clear sign that Odin himself was at hand. As the build up continued Heimdall felt some discomfort. Long ago when he had briefly exercised custodianship over Asgard a portion of the Odinpowers had been bestowed upon him. More recently he had received the merest residual thread of the Odinpowers. Now he was apparently to receive it all, something totally beyond his experience.

"It must be Odin" exclaimed his companion Beta Ray Bill "there is no other explanation."

With that exclamation the semi-darkness of the bleak and barren dimension lifted and their environment took on a lighter, warmer and much more comforting aspect. From some indefinable point Odin appeared walking towards them both. Outwardly it seemed to be the Odin of old. The Odin that had walked among gods and at times among men over millennia. Odin whose name was spoken in whispers across the Multiverse. A force for good, feared by many, respected by all. But then appearances can be deceiving. "If anything he seems even more regal" thought Bill.

As the Allfather moved to speak, Deshaak and the all dark gods entity teleported into the dimension. With them was the designate now exposed as the true manipulator of events. It was the designate as never before seen - fully

matured but bitter and twisted as her manifold destiny had not come to fruition. What stood before them now was an entity with the full power of the mature delegate but embracing a dark side previously unknown. Clearly she continued to sponsor Desaak. Her very maturity suggested that this version of the delegate now present may have come from elsewhere in the time stream.

Desaak, smiling contemptuously, rushed at a Heimdall who was still coming to terms with the enormity of the Odinpower thrust upon him. Heimdall was off balance as Desaak swung his axe at Heimdall's head with a blow clearly intended to decapitate the guardian. Heimdall dodged just barely.

The huge all dark god entity swiped Beta Ray Bill aside as if he were less than a rag doll and reached out with the intent of crushing the Allfather in it's grip. Odin struck with a single bolt of pure elemental energy that shattered the cohesive bonds holding the dark god entity together. With that all of the dark gods seemed to spill out of the entity, Cellestion Zheillia, Perrikus, and all the other contemptible entities. This event seemed to momentarily confuse them. It was not a moment that Odin needed. Before the designate could intervene Odin lifted one hand and scattered the dark gods or rather their sub-molecular component parts to all four corners of this dimension. The look on the face of Cellestion Zheillia, leader of the dark gods, the moment before she was despatched was one of unadulterated hatred. At that moment she knew this was no mere battlefield removal that her brood might live to spread their evil again. No this was a permanent solution to a narcissistic evil that had hung over the pantheon gods for at least as long as Asgard had existed. Odin added a strange irony to this final justice visited upon the narcissists. The dark gods were at their most comfortable in filth and squalor and in the anguish and pain of their victims. Their component molecules had been

dispersed to an environment, though bleak and barren, that was as sterile and pristine pure as it was possible to be.

Meanwhile Heimdall did not make the mistake of striking Desaak with an energy attack that the god slayer would simply absorb. He knew full well the consequences of that – the god slayer fed on god energy. As Heimdall now enjoyed the Odinpower in its fullest measure he might as well use it but in a different way. As Desaak swung again with his axe Heimdall grabbed the blade and ground it into metallic dust as Desaak watched on in disbelief. An enraged Desaak a skilled close in fighter by any standards gathered Heimdall; much to the latter's surprise, in a reverse bear hug.

As the Delegate moved to confront Odin, Beta Ray Bill rushed to Heimdall's aid striking Desaak a mighty blow with his fist in the side of the god slayers head. It was sufficient to cause the Desaak to release his grip on Heimdall. The duo then gathered in Desaak each physically restraining him with their combined efforts. Still Desaak sought to turn this encounter to his advantage trying to absorb Asgardian energies from his close physical contact with the duo. He sought first to draw forth the essence of the god power within Beta Ray Bill. And received a most unwelcome surprise. He was not able to absorb some of the energies within Bill and instead lay writhing upon the ground, as much in surprise as in pain, after Bill sent the power cosmic crackling through him.

Heimdall recalled a time in Asgard when Bill lay dying and was tended to by both Odin and the Silver Surfer. He surmised that by some means or other Bill must have retained some of the power cosmic passed on to him that day and that Desaak was now the unsuspecting recipient of those energies.

The Delegate did not hold back in confronting Odin, there was no reason to do so. She gathered him in a grip that seemed a strange mixture of a lover's embrace and an attempt to crush the life out of him vast energies

coruscating about them both. She was surprisingly strong and for just a moment she seemed to hold her own against even this version of Odin. The Allfather could have dealt with her in a variety of ways but he saw her for what she was - a creature in torment and out of her time. He touched her briefly almost gently on the forehead and it seemed to ease the torment within her. Odin then sent her back to that part of the time stream whence she came with all knowledge of recent events. It was indeed unfortunate that the delegate would not achieve her prophesied destiny but perhaps at least she would now know some release.

Odin stepped forward as Desaak, shrugging, regained his feet and his composure. If he was in any way concerned at being outnumbered by this most formidable trio he did not show it remaining typically defiant. "What are we to do with you god slayer" said the Allfather "forbearance and a slap on the wrist as I used to treat my once stepson are not for one such as you." "I know of your origins which in part explain the way you are but I can no longer allow you to menace the pantheon gods." continued Odin. "Whatever the original wrongs against you, your own evil actions have more than outweighed this." "Desaak you must die this day" said Odin "and know that I take no pleasure in the fact that bringing about your death is my last act before returning forever to a higher existence."

After the long overdue demise of Desaak, Odin, or at least that which was once Odin, did not tarry. Heimdall now acted as a repository for the Odinpower and on his return to Earth/Asgard would relinquish it to the mighty Thor. The former Lord of Asgard said his farewells of both Beta Ray Bill and Heimdall and asked to be remembered to his wife and son and all of those now slowly returning to Asgard on Earth.

Will we ever see his like again?

End

Right to Exist

Asgard

Time Unknown

In his wisdom Allfather Odin had foreseen interference in the history of the nine worlds. He foresaw that some might seek to prevent the gods of Asgard from ever having been created. To deny them, retrospectively, the right of existence.

As the sorcerer supreme of the Asgardian dimension great Odin long ago put the mystical spell in place. A spell to warn him or his successor of any tampering with Asgard's past. From the high place at Hlidskalf located in Valaskjalf, Odin could see all things past and present and much of the future. Warned by his ancient spell the Lord of Asgard and the mighty Thor cast their eyes back to two separate times of creation. With Odin and Thor at Hlidskalf were Balder the Brave, Heimdall, the Lady Sif and the warriors three.

In one scene they witnessed as if it were happening now the Demi-Urge himself seeding life upon the Earth. In another scene they witnessed the meeting of fire and ice, fearsome heat and mind numbing cold in that crucible of Norse creation that lies twixt the ice realm of Niffleheim and fiery Muspelheim. The place known as the Ginnungagap.

Both were sacred events. It was beyond belief that anything might seek to interfere with them.

Yet through the steaming mist, meltwater, ice and fire stood the unmistakable form of a space god, one of the race known as the Celestials. The lone behemoth levitated completely unmoving and seemingly oblivious a little above the Ginnungagap. Elsewhere and elsewhen what appeared to be the very same lone Celestial occupied a stationary orbit on the other side of the Earth from the Demi-Urge as it began the process of creation of life on Earth.

It did not matter that the Celestial took no action as the events of creation unfolded. There was simply no justification for its being present at either time and place.

Odin's original spell continued its work. As the Celestial stood impassive and unmoving the energies of creation began to swirl about it. There were primordial forces at work at the Ginnungagap that commanded respect. Even from a Celestial.

Though small in size compared to the Celestial, father and son were a picture of majesty as they arrived down time streaking above the Ginnungagap. Odin on his eight legged steed Sleipner and Thor in his chariot pulled by his goats' toothgnasher and toothgrinder. Both wore full battle armour. Elsewhere and elsewhen Odin and Thor were an equal picture of majesty as they streaked past the Demi-Urge and encircled the Earth to engage the Celestial.

The god of light and his noble companions looked on from Hlidskalf completely in awe as Lord Odin and Thor the mighty confronted the same Celestial in two separate times and places. Seemingly at the same moment.

Time and Place: Ginnungagap

It says something of the confidence and the power of Odin that in neither time of creation did he see the need to increase his physical size to match the gargantuan Celestial. Though he could easily have done so.

With one using spear and the other using hammer, father and son manipulated the more than compliant forces of creation at Ginnungagap. Directing them against the Celestial while adding touches of their own vast powers. Against such an assault even Celestial armour is not proof and the giant erected about its person a force shield of inconceivable power. Other than this acknowledgement of his vulnerability the colossus took no action.

For a time the hulking form endured the growing assault. Slowly though it began to move backwards and away from the Ginnungagap. Steadily Odin and Thor reinforced the

energies of creation with increasing amounts of their own power. Still the behemoth did not take the offensive against them.

The Celestial sensed that other powers with interests in Asgard's existence and the ability to view events through time were now watching on. Those very same powers watched also the confrontation elsewhere and elsewhen near the Earth.

For his part Odin sensed a previously unseen hand in the conflict. A partial almost ethereal presence backing and possibly manipulating the Celestial. This allowed of few options. There were very few entities anywhere in the Multiverse with the power to manipulate a Celestial.

The Celestial moved further back still now clearly reeling under the assault. Still it took no offensive action.

Thor gathered unto himself some of the willing elemental forces of creation. They became almost as one with him and he allowed them together with his own godly life force to become as one with the greatest weapon of them all.

Odin looked on staying his own might as he saw it would not be needed.

Here was the potential for something never before witnessed. An Asgardian god blast of another order of magnitude from any heretofore seen.

Thor began to release these energies as he could hold them in check no longer. Mjolnir itself threatened to shatter.

Rather than release the energies in a single torrent, Thor did so in pulsating bursts each successive burst more powerful than the preceding one.

The failing Celestial force shield collapsed completely and huge chunks of the giants' armour were torn from it. The Celestial life force within spewed in all directions. However at what seemed to be the crucial moment of defeat, the Celestial regenerated its armour, re-established its protective fields and teleported from the field of battle.

Though not before showing Odin and Thor a feral grin of pure evil that was most unlike a Celestial

Place: Earth

Event/Time: The initial creation of life

The energies of creation unleashed by the Demi-Urge were not as amenable to manipulation by the two Asgardians as were the energies about Ginnungagap. Thus were father and son forced to draw more extensively on their own powers. Still as awareness dawned upon him so the anger of the Demi-Urge grew and he gladly proffered his help to the noble defenders of creation.

The Demi-Urge sensed in Thor the power of the Earth mother yet to be and with Thors acquiescence Demi-Urge manipulated those powers to the nth degree. In the process raising Thor above his normal power level. Just as Thor had manipulated the energies of creation above Ginnungagap. There was no super god blast in this contestation but the result was the same with the Celestial increasingly yielding up ground before a superior aggregation of force. As at Ginnungagap the Celestial protective force shields collapsed and huge slabs of Celestial armour were ripped asunder before the same unseen force regenerated the Celestial and it teleported away from the field of battle.

Odin had the same sense as at Ginnungagap that the Celestial was engaged in an internal conflict for nothing less than the control of its own mind

Place: Asgard

Time: Present Day

As Heimdall watched the final moments of the two battles his ever vigilant, superlative senses began to tingle as never before.

Even before the battles in the past were complete all of Asgard sensed a shaking of the great ash, the world tree Yggdrasil, that joins all nine worlds. As if a giant hand sought to pull it up by its roots severing the connection between the worlds of Asgardian cosmology.

Towards the top of the world tree in Asgard itself the same Celestial as seemed to be battling Odin and Thor was clearly the author of Yggdrasil's distress. Only now it was even larger, perhaps of Exitar class dimensions. Yet the titan seemed not like a Celestial at all. Where one of the space gods might have seemed emotionless, aloof and totally uncaring the behemoth before them seemed very animated, very emotional as if another quite different force had taken control of the Celestial armour.

In the mere moments before Thor and Odin returned to present day Asgard the Celestial, or whatever force now exerted control over it discovered a little known fact. One that historically seems to have escaped the attention of most of the enemies of Asgard. That Asgard without Thor and without Odin is not an entirely defenceless place. That collectively there is other power residing in Asgard besides the power of Odin and Thor.

There are some lessons that can only be learned through experience.

As the Celestial leviathan prepared to tear the world tree Yggdrasil away from its nine worlds base and cast the great ash into the heavens it hesitated. Perhaps because of its still unresolved inner conflict or perhaps it was bracing for what was a prodigious feat even by its own lofty standards.

Balder the Brave sensed the giant's hesitation. With Odin and Thor still absent the god of light gathered unto himself some of the ambient power existing within the very land of Asgard. Then the most intense light emanated from him as he took on the form of a very small but quite brilliant star. In this form he rose to eye level with the behemoth seeking to add to the giant's confusion. By some unknown mystical means Asgard was spared much of the massive light output which was reserved almost exclusively for the intruder.

Surprisingly Loki god of mischief rallied to the cause enjoining with the Norn Queen Karnilla to launch a combined

mystic assault. The intent being to add to the Celestial's confusion and delay it until Odin and Thor returned. Heimdall's earlier warning had alerted all of Asgard to the threat. The warriors three and Lady Sif had allowed their life forces to enter the Destroyer construct and they sallied forth holding the personal sword of Odin itself. Meanwhile the bulk of Asgardians including even the women and children formed up into the rarely used single warrior entity known as "The All Asgard Warrior." It was so huge as to rival the Celestial in size. Heimdall's consciousness directed the Warrior into battle. Including the women and children was not a cowardly act but rather a precaution. Ultimately they were better protected as part of the All Asgard Warrior than left in the houses and farmlets of Asgard. In any event the Asgardians were a warrior race.

Whatever force now powered the Celestial it had not expected such resistance from an Asgard with both Odin and Thor absent.

The behemoth still struggling internally found itself beset by physical attack from the All Asgard Warrior aggregation, mystical attack from Asgard's second and third most powerful sorcerers, the Destroyer construct through its disintegration beam and the Balder/Sun's irritating light attack.

Then suddenly the situation changed. Looking directly into what seemed to be the Celestial's eyes the Balder/ Sun sensed that whatever inner turmoil had been troubling the Colossus, it had now been resolved and not to the benefit of Asgard...

The Exitar size Celestial now only a proxy for a still greater power released its hold on the world ash. It rose to its full height and thrust the All Asgard Warrior aggregation aside. From its eyes two bolts of force that were definitely not of Celestial origin extinguished the Balder/Star reducing it to a small blackened lightless mass. It then vaporized the Destroyer construct, though the noble life forces therein

escaped to their nearby physical bodies. Loki and Karnilla appeared to escape via interdimensional teleportation but a single bolt of energy for each of them struck them down seemingly lifeless in a vastly distant dimension. Although all of this took valuable time.

The Celestial then turned its attention to the great world ash. The entire huge trunk/central axis of the world tree shuddered as did all of the near infinite elements of the branch system. It seemed that all living things in all parts of the nine worlds felt the upheaval. Yet Yggdrasil did not move at all and unbelieving the titan redoubled its efforts still with no affect. Then it saw why. Located lower down the huge trunk at Midgard the mighty Thor held on firmly to the massive girth. No one really knows the true limits of the strength of the Thunder god because mostly those limits have never really been tested. Possibly this day was an exception.

As the behemoth strained still further so did Asgard's strongest god. It is true that the Celestial had to overcome the inertia of Yggdrasil and whatever else that living entity might do to assist the mighty Thor. It was equally clear that Thor faced something stronger and more powerful still than even an Exitar class Celestial. Eventually the contestation was resolved as the upper parts of Yggdrasil that the Celestial embraced broke away under the intense strain. The Celestial or whatever else it was stumbled away, at that moment no more above Newton's law of inertia than the rest of us. As it staggered back the entity realized that momentarily it could not sense the whereabouts of the Odinpowers.

And at that precise moment of his enemy's instability and uncertainty Odin struck. With mystically much enhanced size and strength the Allfather appeared seemingly from nowhere and struck the entity with the full force of the seldom used "Odinblow." This blow utilizes controlled

warriors madness in a short and not immediately repeatable paroxysm of physical power.

As Odin struck the blow to end all blows the Celestial's head snapped back and almost came off its torso as the Colossus hurtled into the skies of Asgard and far beyond. Celestial energies mixed with energies that were decidedly not of Celestial origin spewed forth. The latter seeming to predominate. This gave Odin his first real indication as to the true identity of the usurper.

In the time it took the Celestial to return Thor teleported Loki and Karnilla back to Asgard for the ministrations of Asgard's physicians and Odin restored the noble Balder to good health.

The Celestial returned though it seemed to take a while. When it did it was obvious that it was now a Celestial in appearance only. Energies roiled within it that even the monstrous Celestial frame struggled to contain. Nor did the controlling entity seem to care much whether those vast energies were contained or not.

"Let us strip the trappings of pretense about our enemy" Odin cried to his son "let us lay it bare for all to see." With that came the very highest order godblasts from three different directions, from Odin, Thor and the All Asgard Warrior.

Concentrating totally on the Celestial the unparalleled and unprecedented stream of energies began continuously vaporizing the entire armoured frame of the hulking Celestial. In response the controlling entity began continuously regenerating the Celestial armour. For a time an impasse of sorts was reached.

But as Odin, Thor and all Asgard continued the attack their enemy seemed to relent and the vaporizing Celestial armour was not regenerated. At that moment some of the surrounding space and matter was warped into the manifestation of a semi-humanoid form.

“You do not need to do that evil one” boomed Odin “we are all too aware who and what you are.”

Before Odin, Thor and the All Asgard Warrior stood an abstract entity that represented a composite of the evil aspects of Eternity and Infinity. It had now become an offshoot of those two great abstract powers and an independent entity virtually as powerful as its source.

When it originally separated from Eternity/Infinity the new entity had sought time to think to be away from interference from the other abstracts. In Leandarr the wandering Celestial it had found the perfect host. A powerful host that no one would be likely to bother and that might potentially roam anywhere in the Multiverse. It had dwelled within the great Celestial thinking its dark thoughts and slowly influencing and eventually dominating the space god.

It's subsequent decision to destroy Asgard either by preventing its being created or in the present day was not an arbitrary one. Odin represented one of the great powers for good in the Multiverse. To retrospectively deny him existence would be a great victory for those inclined to darkness. Even more it would be a signal sending fear down the metaphysical spines of all abstract and near abstract entities

But the entity realized its mistake.

“Odin and Thor” telepathed the entity “you are both more powerful than even the legends that surround you.” “You are more powerful than the memory I retain of your past contestation with that from which part of me came, namely Infinity. By your actions you have earned the right to exist”

The composite abstract entity was on the verge of departing.

Odin could not allow that.

At Odin's instigation Thor raise his great hammer ready to strike. Coruscating with all manner of Asgardian energies the greatest weapon ever made struck the warped manifestation at the same moment as Odin's mystical spell.

The warped semi-humanoid manifestation fell completely apart.

Odin knew from past experience that even abstract entities are sometimes vulnerable to vastly powerful extra-dimensional forces. And ultimately were he and Thor themselves not of this category?

The Allfather then proceeded to warp space, time and reality to create a cocooning prison about his enemy.

In time the great abstract entities Eternity, Infinity, Death, and Oblivion came and with them the great Galactus all to take their charge into custody. They knew that if ever it came this way again Odin would not be so merciful.

Odin is not omnipotent. Never think that. He may be challenged and he can be beaten but a wise adversary chooses his ground. Even among the great powers it is said that only a fool would challenge Odin in Asgard. At the very centre of his power. All the more so when he is backed by the power of the greatest warrior of all, his son Thor the mighty and all else Asgard has to offer.

Let the future enemies of Asgard take note.

End

The Battle At Time's End

A few moments before Time's End

Time's Guardian looked out upon the bleak, barren, rocky landscape. There were no stars any more and the small Celestial body that he now stood upon was the last planet. It should have been totally dark but a few mystical fires still burned on various parts of the planetoid, the last remnants of the final battle. There was no strength in the fires and they would soon die.

Time's Guardian's ancient adversary, Fate, looked at him silently from across the planetoid. The final facet of a struggle nearly as old as time itself had played out. There was nothing left to say.

Ultimately this struggle had transcended even that between good and evil.

Fate was a component of the original forces of creation. An entity with a strong pre-conception as to exactly how events should play out. Time's Guardian had been a creation of all of the contemporary great powers and civilisations when the Multiverse was yet very young. A powerful counterweight to Fate.

Still, the end time was nigh upon them, and far, far sooner than it might have been.

The great Guardian of Time thought to himself that there was no bleaker, no more hopeless, no lonelier place than here on this barren rock watching the very last flows of time. Soon now even the small planetoid would disintegrate and even Time's Guardian himself would cease to exist.

Fate itself prepared to dissipate into the nothingness of end time. Yet even now Time's Guardian readied for one last throw of the dice. A totally unexpected final gambit.

Mustering his final reserves of energy, the great protector of the time stream had just enough in reserve to summon forth one of the great powers of the past.

Yet which ally to call forth? who to summon against Fate itself?

Time's Guardian reviewed the history of the Multiverse, considered all of its great powers.

He who was called forth from the past would need to be strength and power personified. Yet strength and power alone would not be enough. Courage would need to be his middle name. More he would need to intimately understand the nature of time and the role that Fate and Time's Guardian had played in that. More still the entity called forth would need to have been warned at some time in the past of just this contingency.

One name stood out among them all. The mighty Thor, God of Thunder, Son of Odin, one time liege lord of all of mighty Asgard. The only other question? At which point, in his immensely long lifetime, to seek out the great Asgardian?

Not as a callow and inexperienced youth, nor as a headstrong young adult. Nor at the other end of Thors life as an ageing, venerable adviser to the mighty Magnison. It would have to be at the very zenith of his great life.

So it came to pass that as his final act, the great Guardian of Time brought forth from the past the inconceivably powerful entity known as Thor of Asgard.

Millions of years ago, in the great hall of Asgard, Time's Guardian had met with the mighty Thor, and spoken to him, warned him of this very moment. As the Guardian had also done with certain other great powers.

Thus the mighty Thor was not at all surprised by this turn of events.

Thor knew well the nature of Fate and had long ago fought alongside Time's Guardian in the last two of the inconclusive intertemporal wars. Thor even had his own personal triumph of sorts over the lesser though still formidable Asgardian fates.

As the mighty Thor looked across the planetoid at the

physical form assumed by Fate, the great Time's Guardian, his last reserves gone, dissipated into the nothingness of end time.

As Thor strode towards Fate, the realisation dawned on him. In the whole history of our Multiverse had any entity faced a more daunting, more impossible task than that now confronting him?

On the very cusp of Time's End, the Asgardian god had become the de facto protector of what little remained of time. The new Time's Guardian and the only still living entity capable of challenging Fate's now nearly complete designs. The origins of Fate were known to the mighty Thor. At times dawn during the original act of creation of the very first Universes the creator split into its component parts, good, evil and fate. It was not an equal split nor was it an entirely clean split but these elements of the force of creation were never again reunited.

This close to End Time, no Celestial means existed by which time might be measured. Nor would any instrumentation work here. Further Thor knew that the normal laws of time travel and time measurement did not apply here.

Yet for Thor a measure still existed. The beat of his Asgardian heart. Even End Time could not distort that. Fate did not need to kill the mighty Thor, he had only to delay the Thunder God for a few hundreds of heartbeats and the End Time would come.

The only thing in Thors favour was that he had known that this time would come and had been able to prepare for it. Raising his mighty hammer, Thor invoked the most ancient and powerful of all the rune spells at his command. A spell now embedded within his mighty hammer. A spell that others had enhanced in preparation for this time. Most importantly of all Time's Guardian had reinforced the spell during his visit to Asgard long ago. The effect of the spell was to slow down the time flow on the approach to end

time. To seek to delay the inevitable. There might yet be time.

“You, you ____” taunted Fate “did you not learn the futility of confronting me during the time wars.” “You may be the greatest warrior who ever drew breath, but I am one of the original forces of creation.” “I am synonymous with inevitability, what I determine becomes fact, I am Fate and none may gainsay me.”

But the time for words, of any kind, was well past and Fate knew this.

Fate itself took the offensive attacking Thor on all conceivable levels.

Thor twirled mighty mjolnir at a speed defying description, creating a multi-layered force screen that initially held against all the levels of Fate’s attack, except one. The attack on the skyfathers mind.

*

The son of Odin found himself as a boy playing with his step brother Loki at the base of his father’s throne. For one so young Loki’s face looked grotesque. All the jealousy and hatred that would become more obvious in later years were evident in the boy. Already Loki had some small knowledge of the mystic arts and leering he unsheathed an enchanted dagger. Suddenly the boy Thor was desperately fighting for his life. Allfather Odin, deep in thought on his throne, seemed not to notice.

Thor knew it was Fates doing. A manipulation of his mind. Yet for all that it seemed very, very real in a physical sense. Just barely Thor defeated his brother knocking him semi-conscious and hurling the dagger away.

Afterwards Thor found himself ageing and being confronted by different enemies of his past. He was being taken through his entire life span facing those relatively few enemies which had, at some time or other, defeated him. Thor could sense that the only immediate danger to him was this attack on his mind. That otherwise mighty mjolnir’s

force shields were holding. Fate itself at bay. Somehow though he knew that if he was to survive he would have to win each and every one of these battles with which he was now being confronted. To defeat everyone who had ever beaten him in the past.

Thor's main link with reality was the beat of his heart and his ability to detect it. It was beating only very slowly leading him to believe that the "nightmare fights" were taking place very quickly or at least being processed very quickly by his mind.

The fights went on and on and on. Each time his maturing physical body seemed to be replenished but not the accumulating battle strain.

Eventually (and Thor knew from his own heartbeat that it had not been long) the nightmare battles drew to a close. Every single one of Thors enemies had been humbled.

In a sense each of the entities that Thor had been forced to fight in his mind had been a champion chosen by Fate. As almost all of them had defeated Thor at some time in his life Fate had reasoned that it was a trial that Thor could never complete. That the son of Odin would never emerge from this attack on his mind. In this respect, even Fate itself, had underestimated Thor.

Still, as he had intended, Fate had occupied Thor's mind for long enough.

The reinforced rune spell that had been delaying Time's End had been shattered as had the artefact in which it had been embedded. Thor could feel the actual temporal pull of End Time as he saw the shattered pieces of his hammer, the greatest weapon ever made, slowly fading into non existence.

Thor, Odinson, the de facto Guardian of Time had by his own reckoning no more than a few heartbeats left.

It was not without good reason that he was known as the Lord of Storms. Whether that be upon Earth, in Asgard, on another world, or deep in interstellar space. That power over storms extended to those of the cosmic and even intertemporal variety.

Among his very greatest power was to summon a time storm. He had rarely done so as the consequences would have been too grave to contemplate. Almost always, with the exception of the time wars, Thor had held back.

Now, on the cusp of Time's End, was not such a time.

Thor would have preferred to have mighty Mjolnir, with which to channel the power of the time storm. But Mjolnir had been shattered into pieces and even now was beginning to disappear in the temporal pull of Time's End.

Thor wasn't even sure if, so close to End Time, his power over storms would work here, but of course he had to try.

Also he was suffering intense mental battle fatigue from Fate's attack on his mind. In his mind he had fought and defeated all those enemies and a few others who had defeated him in times past. More in doing so the battle strain from each encounter had been cumulative and was now almost unbearable. As no doubt Fate had intended.

As Thor summoned the time storm, for a heartbeat or perhaps two, nothing happened. There was only the final running down of time. Then it came. It was the greatest storm of any kind that the son of Odin, or anyone else, had ever brought forth. As if somehow all of time past was demonstrating to Thor that it was on his side. That it only needed someone to show it the way.

Yet would even this be enough to stop the inevitably of End Time?

Even as he brought about the storm Thor sought desperately to retrieve the shattered remnants of his hammer.

Odin's original spell created a bond between Thor and his hammer that very few completely understood, even though

many respected it. Fate itself being no exception. Thor in his wisdom had still further strengthened that bond.

Now as Thor called unto the shattered remnants of the hammer supreme, the strength of that bond was tested as never before. Thor reached out to Mjolnir with parts of his own life essence invoking a rune spell designed to join them and make them as one. This did not happen, yet, against the seemingly irresistible pull of End Time, parts of the great hammer returned to their master.

It was not quite all of mighty Mjolnir, but as the partial hammer reformed, not through troll's forge but through the mystical power of its master, it was enough.

Such was the ferocity of the time storm that even Fate seemed to be shielding itself from the onslaught.

Yet Thor saw that the march to End Time had only been halted.

An impasse appeared to have been reached. A balance, if you will, between the inertia of the slide into End Time and the sheer ferocity of the Time Storm.

At this point Fate again intervened using its own raw power to disturb the balance.

Thor saw that the planetoid upon which he had engaged Fate had begun to implode.

He saw also a strange sight indeed. The (apparently) physical bodies of some of those "champions" of Fate that he had engaged and defeated in the assault on his mind, drifting into End Time. Though these were not the entities of his own time, his suspicions that Fate had somehow given physical form to the battles in his mind, were confirmed. It was of no consequence now.

Responding to Fate's challenge, the greatest warrior that had ever drawn breath raised his hammer high drawing on part of the time storm and the totality of his own life force. Letting all these become as one: elements of the time storm, his own life essence and the greatest weapon of all.

The great intertemporal energies lanced forth first striking down Fate then tipping the delicate balance twixt the slide into End Time and the Time Storm.

It was over. Not only had the relentless advance into the oblivion of End Time been halted but it had now actually been reversed. Ultimately it would be by billions of years at least.

Do not let this cause you to doubt the inevitability of The End Time. It will come. In a far future as the then final remaining Universes implode in on themselves and on one another and we are returned to the absolute nothingness that was before time and will be after time.

But not when Fate decreed it should be, thanks to the mighty Thor.

In that far future the son of Odin will stay on, becoming the permanent Time's Guardian until the final and irreversible arrival of Time's End.

End

The Revenge of Loki

Asgard 500 YLT (Year of our Lord Thor) (or 2500 AD in the displaced Earth calendar)

The god of evil seethed with seemingly impotent rage. How could Lord Thor have treated him thus? Had he not loyally served his master as head of Thors security forces ever since Thor had assumed custodianship of the Earth? Had he not foregone his aspirations to leadership of Earth and Asgard? Now all of Loki's considerable power and privileges had been removed.

Even worse the dark god was now persona non grata in Asgard City and for all intents and purposes under house arrest in his own castle. Loki's powers of teleportation, interdimensional and otherwise had been taken from him. As yet he was still capable of travelling in his astral form and of mental probing and telepathic influence over great distance. Still he was being closely monitored and Lord Thor might at any stage take these powers from him.

In the early days of Lord Thors reign Loki along with the Enchantress had been the greatest influences on the monarch. They had gently steered him down a darker path. Still over time other forces had sought the ear of Lord Thor seeking to make his reign over Earth more benevolent. Lady Sif had played a part as had Frigga, Thialfi and Thor's son by the Enchantress great Magni. Loki reeled at the thought of how the upstart Thialfi was now Thors grand vizier, most trusted of all in Earth or Asgard. Loki also knew that timely appearances on several occasions by the personification of the OdinPower had profoundly influenced the Odinson. Also it seemed the accumulated list of casualties of those who had opposed Thor's reign over Earth had weighed heavily upon the monarch long years after their deaths.

Not so long ago Lord Thor finally took the same path as his father had going through the necessary ritual ordeal to

acquire the knowledge of the runes. This was the final stage in Thor's long path to enlightenment. While Loki's loss of power and privilege had been gradual, the emergence of Rune Thor made it complete. It was at this point that Thor was finally reconciled to the fact that Loki had no part to play in the affairs of either Earth or Asgard.

In all truth Thor now faced much the same dilemma as his father had long years ago – what exactly to do with Loki.

Eternal banishment of his step brother to a fortified imprisonment within limbo was under consideration.

A bored Loki brooded in his confinement no matter that it was comfortable. The hatred festered within him. A hatred in many ways now greater than that which he bore for his half sibling when they were children and in their earlier adult lives. Loki's thoughts turned to possible alliances – Dormammu, Tyrant, Mephisto, Thanos, Zheillia and her dark gods were just a few of the names that crossed his mind.

The enmity was so great that Loki was prepared to ally himself with any entity or combination of entities that would help to humiliate his half brother. Regardless of any price they might demand. Even Mangog briefly went through Loki's mind but that hateful entity had been killed by mighty Magni scores of years ago.

To this end Loki was aware of dark unfathomable powers that had plumbed far greater depths of evil than any of the traditional dark powers. It was to these forces that he would address himself if he could but break free of his current restraints. The Lord of Evil considered how to contact them.

In all truth since Lord Thor's ascendancy to power many of the traditional enemies of Earth and Asgard had shown little interest in either. There may have been considerable opposition to Lord Thor on Earth itself but with the sole exception of Mangog no extra-terrestrial or extra-dimensional force had menaced either Earth or Asgard.

It came to pass that Lord Thor now with the even greater consciousness, knowledge and awareness afforded by the

rune magics decided upon a quest of some magnitude. To make contact with some of the great other-dimensional pantheons. Thialfi counselled against Thors departure – suggesting even that mighty Magni might go in his stead but the Earth/Asgard Lord would hear none of it. Thialfi even suggested that Thor undertake the quest in astral form or just resort to remote communication.

Thor pondered upon whom to leave at the helm in his absence. Strangely neither Magni nor Thialfi were chosen. The former was still seen as too inexperienced and the latter was best placed as Grand Vizier. Balder and Heimdall who had both served in the past and indeed Lady Sif all came to mind but in the end Thor left custodianship with Hogun the Grim temporarily bequeathing him with elements of the Odinpower. “Life may be a little dour in Asgard during my absence” mused Thor “but I have every confidence in Hogun ably supported by Thialfi, Magni, Sif, Hogun’s fellow warriors and others. “In any event I can return immediately if needs be” thought Thor finally.

Prior to his departure Thor further stifled Loki placing a damper on an assortment of the evil one’s powers particularly his telepathic and astral projection capabilities. No matter, the Lord of Evil saw his opportunity.

He is known by many names – God of Evil, Lord of Lies, Master of Mischief, and Prince of Deception are among them. Sometimes the adversaries of Loki, son of Farbauti and Laufey and adopted son of Odin the Almighty forget just how cunning and deceptive he can be. It is not the vastness of his power but rather the sheer diversity of powers he commands and his willingness to use them. Even Thor, Lord of Earth and Asgard can sometimes momentarily forget the sheer craftiness, the pure wiliness of Loki.

With Lord Thor departed on his great quest to seek out other pantheons Loki waited patiently until deep into the Asgardian night. He knew that he was being closely monitored. Also Thor had placed a near impenetrable

mystical energy field about his palace. Eventually Loki moved into a small antechamber of his castle where he was afforded some privacy from prying eyes. There and only with great effort Loki split into two separate beings. One left the antechamber for the master bedroom. The other half shapeshifted into a microbe without loss of intelligence. In this microscopic form this part of that which was Loki was able to slip through Thors mystical energy field.

Shapeshifting again part Loki took the form of a bird departing for a remote part of Asgard. The bird flew swiftly yet so silently that even Heimdall's keen senses would not have detected it. Mindful of the sensory capabilities of both Thialfi and Heimdall part Loki knew that utmost stealth was of the essence. At his destination part Loki "phased" through the base of a mountain into internal caverns. Only here did he shapeshift back into his normal form and thence struggle to project himself astrally.

The much attenuated astral form of half of that which was Loki would have been barely perceptible to the ordinary Asgardian. However it was as clear as day to those who received it. In a place that would have made Hel or even Mephisto's dread realm seem blissful two entities listened to the astral form. The mother(s) of the two spawn of Thanos were a matter of conjecture. Mistress Death and Mistress Love had been mentioned as had others. Suffice it to say that these offspring were not creatures one visited socially. But Loki was ready to strike a deal with anyone or anything that would listen.

The Thanos progeny were prepared to assist Loki but at a price and only so far. In mighty Thor's absence they would facilitate Loki's physical escape from Asgard. There was also something they were prepared to loan him - although in truth it was not theirs to give. Suffice to say they could direct him to it and could facilitate his acquisition of it. What he did with it after that was not their concern, but it would have to be returned.

Deathos and Thaove discussed two prices for their services. One if Loki was successful in his obvious ambitions and another if he failed. One thing the Thanos spawn made very clear – they would never join Loki in a direct clash with Thor in Asgard. Almost all known powers knew better than to directly challenge Lord Thor in Asgard.

When it's business was done that part of Loki that had escaped the confines of his castle returned in the same way that it had departed and rejoined it's other half making Loki again whole.

That next Asgardian night the grim one walked out in the City – he was very restive. With the benefit of the part Odinpowers his senses tingled and he knew that all was not well. Hogun instructed Heimdall, Thialfi and the Asgard watch to be more than usually alert. Hogun then levitated a reasonable height above the city watching over all.

Heimdall and Thialfi raised the alarm almost simultaneously. An interdimensional intrusion near Loki's palace. Hogun the Grim, temporary custodian of Asgard was already on the scene. Thors mystical energy field about Loki's castle had collapsed and a good part of the castle had been destroyed in the process.

About to teleport away were Loki and two entities unknown to Hogun. As Hogun moved to stop them the larger of the two confronted him and in a brief struggle Hogun, part Odinpowers notwithstanding, was thrown to the ground. Instantly drawing power from the very land of Asgard Hogun arose with fists clenched. The creature Deathos regarded the grim one for a moment as if he would relish the challenge. Then he seemed to think better of it as the trio teleported away despite Thialfi's attempts to hold them in an energy field.

Magni who had been with the Asgard watch approached Hogun and whispered in his ear.

The Destroyer armour further enhanced by Thor in recent times but not actually used in nearly 500 years was gone.

“We have no choice,” said Hogun “other than to request Lord Thors immediate return.”

The Lord of Evil looked on at the roiling mass of disparate life forces. The full range of emotions known to man or god issued from it and a few more as well. “There must be billions of entities here” he mused. “Much more” said the Thanos spawn Deathos, reading Loki’s mind. “Where are their physical bodies” asked Loki. “They have none” responded the other Thanos progeny Thaove “at least not anymore.” Loki chose not to enquire further about that.

“The life force amalgam that you see before you is a collection of as diverse a range of entities as you could imagine” said Deathos “the physical forms once possessed by some of them were powerful in their own right.” “We offer this on loan to you for empowering Asgard’s Destroyer construct beyond anything you might have imagined” finished Thaove pointing to the inert form of the Destroyer nearby.

“The price these two have demanded for their services is unthinkable” mused the trickster heavily shielding his thoughts while already considering ways in which he could avoid paying it.

“The ability of Odin’s construct to absorb life forces has never been fully tested” said Loki. “Conceivably, energized by sufficient life force there is almost no limit to the Destroyers power” replied Deathos smiling. The smile reminded Loki of Deathos father.

Loki thought on the possibilities and the dangers, so many disparate intelligences, a dominant one might take over control of the Destroyer. Or it might simply be too many intelligences impossible for any single one to exercise control. “It is just an amalgam of life forces now with a very limited overriding intelligence” responded Thaove as if reading Loki’s thoughts again. “The individual component intelligences are not discernable.” “Whatever that means exactly” mused Loki again heavily shielding his thoughts.

“You are welcome to leave your own physical body here in our safekeeping” Deathos smiled again. It was an offer Loki refused.

Loki had been able to reassert those of his powers that Thor had recently dampened. In part this was due to Thors enchantment being less effective in this place. Loki’s interdimensional teleportation capabilities were a different matter as Thor had actually removed them totally. Still this was not an immediate issue – one of Thor’s more recent refinements to the Destroyer construct was to add a teleportation capability, interdimensional and otherwise. Loki struggled to find an optimum size for the Destroyer. Celestial size was comfortable in terms of housing the life force amalgam but otherwise seemed too large and too impersonal. He would savour victory more if he did not see his adversaries as ants. At the Destroyers normal size it was simply impossible to contain all the life forces within it. The evil one settled on something in-between – about the size of a large storm giant. Deathos and Thaove had been truthful about one thing at least. The overriding intelligence of the life force amalgam was modest at best and no individual intelligences were evident.

Loki saw the need for haste. Thor would be already be back in Asgard and would quickly trace him even to this remote and unutterably foul place. Thor would come and soon. Loki did not want to fight Lord Thor here. Victory would be all the sweeter in the ruins of Asgard.

Thus it came to pass that the Destroyer construct controlled by Loki’s intelligence but empowered by a life force amalgam dwarfing, by many orders of magnitude, Loki’s own life force arrived above Asgard City.

The Lord of Asgard and Earth was ready for it. Thor in recently made battle armour grew to the Destroyer’s size and levitated skyward to meet it. Thor held what was once his fathers spear gungir in one hand and a shield that Loki did not immediately recognize in the other hand.

From the vantage point of their own distant dimension the spawn of Thanos watched on. "Have you discerned where the trickster has hidden his physical body brother?" asked Thaove. "I believe I have brother" smiled Deathos "in the event that information may prove useful to us."

The Loki Destroyer looked about, the location of Asgard's defences was about as he would have predicted with one notable exception. He realized, disconcertingly, that Thialfi was nowhere in Asgard.

As Lord Thor and the Loki Destroyer confronted each other in the sky above Asgard Magni called out from below. "It is not too late uncle, you are of Asgard, you are one of us, and we should not fight among ourselves." Even as he said this Magni twirled his great hammer (once known as the hammer of Thor) at fantastic speed readying to throw it. As if he didn't truly believe he could influence Loki.

The only response to Magni's utterance was the energy that started to gather atop the Destroyers disintegrator visor. Using not only his teleportation capabilities but every ounce of his legendary speed Thialfi, Grand Vizier of Asgard sought out the physical body of Loki. He did not know where it was but Thor had supplied some possible locations, some even going back to his and Loki's childhood. Thialfi was being systematic, investigating each possibility in the order of their probability. Thor sent him Balder and the Lady Sif to help with some locations.

Deathos, Thanos spawn thought he knew the location of the body but he had been cleverly misled. The entity smiled again, in truth a grotesque caricature of his own fathers smile. Thanos was almost handsome by comparison with this offspring. The Thanos spawn thought they had been playing Loki for a fool, but he was not known as the prince of deception without good reason.

As the energies began to gather atop the Destroyers visor Magni threw mjolnor coruscating with electrical energies

directly at the Destroyer visor. Thus pitting one of Asgard's great weapons against another.

Magni was the strongest god of Asgard past or present. His throw at least as hard and straight and true as any his father might have made when the great hammer was Thors. Many of Asgard's enemies would have fallen before it, but alas not this version of the Destroyer. The hammer struck against the Destroyers force fields, which flared clearly registering the mighty blow, and then it returned to its master. As if the near indestructible durability of the Destroyers armour were not enough Lord Thor in more recent times had added more powerful force screens to protect that which seemed hardly to be in need of protection.

The Loki Destroyer high above Asgard was unmoved but the energies gathering atop the visor began to diminish – had the schemer experienced a change of heart? Not at all as the Destroyer struck wildly at nearby Thor. Loki had decided that rather than simply incinerate Thor under the Destroyers disintegration weapon he would prefer to first humiliate him with a physical beating the like of which he had never known. Besides it just felt good. The Lord of Earth and Asgard seemed prepared to oblige.

Using the shield of Odin Thor blocked the Destroyers blow although the noise from its fist striking the shield was deafening across all of Asgard and was even heard upon the Earth. Thor struck at the Destroyer using the edge of the Odin shield putting it off balance. For a moment it seemed as if the Destroyer might fall to Asgard below and Thor teleported them both to an uninhabited part of Asgard. There the battle continued. Leaving the enlarged gungir aside Thor with his strength still mystically augmented wielded the Odin shield with both hands. Blocking blow after blow from the Destroyer and again unbalancing it with well placed and timed thrusts with the shield. It was a display of “shieldmanship” that would have made an old and now long

dead friend justly proud. At the same time Magni reined blow on blow against the Destroyer, without any apparent affect. At one stage Magni was swatted miles away as if he was no more than an irritant.

However the warrior in Thor soon tired of this semi-defensive approach. Sensing that Loki was having difficulty controlling the Destroyer Thor threw the enlarged Odin shield at fantastic speed at the Destroyer causing it to lose its footing. Thor then waded in pummeling the Destroyer with fists moving faster than any known pistons. By now Loki was even having difficulty controlling the Destroyer's size as it grew immensely. Thor mystically increased his own size to compensate.

Meanwhile together with Balder and Sif, Thialfi finally located Loki's body. It was in Asgard in the place that is not a place. Where as a child Loki had been able to hide from Thor and even from Odin. He did not know even now, that Thor had also uncovered this place in his youth. Still it seemed that if Loki's body was to be discovered he would rather it be by his own kind than the Thanos spawn.

As the trio looked down at Loki's inert body Balder was struck from behind and rendered unconscious. Sif turned and confronted Deathos impudently here in Asgard itself. Thialfi launched himself at maximum speed but was held firm by Deathos. Lady Sif struck with her sword but with his third hand Deathos grabbed the sword and easily broke it in two. The Asgardian trio appeared overmatched but just at the moment that Deathos prepared to make good his escape with Loki's body he was struck directly in the face by the mace of Hogun. Now if there is anything worse than being struck in the face by Hogun's mace it is being struck twice in the face by that weapon as Deathos will attest.

Normally even a blow from the grim one ought not to trouble one such as Deathos but somehow the fiercest of the warriors three had retained vestiges of the Odinpowers bestowed upon him during his brief but recent custodianship

of Asgard. Hogun the Grim is not given to smiling very often but as he prepared to strike Deathos again he was grinning from ear to ear. Deathos did not return the smile and deciding that discretion was the better part of valour he departed on the instant for his foul smelling habitat.

At 2,000 feet tall and still growing the Destroyer paused clearly in some difficulties. At this point Magni grabbed it at the base of an ankle and physically lifted it and threw it into a nearby mountain. It was a prodigious feat of strength by any standards. The Destroyer still seemed confused and was slow to recover. By the time it did re-enter the battle Loki's life force was compelled to depart it for his threatened physical body.

The colossus came to a grinding halt much to the relief of Thor and Magni. Thor sensed the inner turmoil within the titan and a struggle amongst vastly different intelligences to take control. The Lord of Asgard and Earth sensed also that the integrity of the Destroyer armour was being threatened by the sheer power and volume of the life forces contained therein.

Whatever battle had raged within the Destroyer was over. The giant moved coldly forward energies again gathering atop its disintegration visor as bludgeoning waves of Asgardian and other energies were directed from its hands against Thor and Magni. Between them Thor using Gungir and Magni using mjolnor were able to absorb much of the initial energy assault.

Still sensing weakness in the Destroyer armour Thor threw Gungir with all his might, the weapon defeating the Destroyer's energy shields and lodging in the Destroyers chest cavity. Before the Destroyer could pull it loose Thor grabbed it pushing it further in and wrenching it at the same time using it as a conduit to convey his own vast energies. Magni assisted the process with a controlled but nonetheless powerful godblast right at the breach in the Destroyer armour. It was enough, the Destroyer armour was

rent asunder and the countless life forces therein drifted helplessly away into the Asgardian atmosphere. The souls were clearly in torment and screams even to numb the minds of gods could be heard across all Asgard and (laws of physics notwithstanding) across the dimensional barrier to Earth.

There are proper places for the souls of all living beings and they are under the custody of a far greater force even than Thor of Asgard and Earth. Knowing this to be so and exercising all of his formidable power Thor helped the tormented souls along their way assisting them in their long journey to the place of final rest. Magni looked on pride swelling in his heart as at the end of the long process his father offered up the last few souls still adrift in the skies above Asgard.

Back in his own body and with Thor distracted at the time Loki was able to escape his captors. But not for long. In truth where could he go that the mighty Thor would not find him? In the end with his teleportation powers already taken from him they found him in a pile of dung transmogrified into a dung beetle. In all truth he looked relieved to have been caught as it cannot have been that much of an existence.

As to the Thanos spawn Deathos and Thaove, they will not be paid for their services to Loki. Even if Loki wanted to repay them he is in no position to do so.

End

Final Revenge

The landscape was as bleak, and barren, as any he had experienced. Not a single strand of vegetation and just a small dilapidated cottage located on the broadest part of the isthmus.

At least it had the shape of an isthmus. A long narrow neck and bulbous head. Yet there was nothing behind the isthmus or ahead of it, or above or below it. Not even the stars.

It just sat there in a sea of nothingness.

If the mighty Thor had encountered a more miserable place, in all of his vast travels, he could not recall it. The cottage reminded him of a disused crofter's residence in the islands of the Outer Hebrides of a world he had once protected.

A woman form, in rags, with long unkempt hair, and suffering etched in her face came out of the cottage. She was frail and slightly bent over. An equally ragged looking, boy child followed her out.

"Who are you stranger? and what are you doing here?" she mouthed in an unusual form of communication that was a mixture of audible sound and telepathy. "No one comes here," she continued, unable to disguise her surprise, "no one can come here."

"You seem like a sort of, well a ____, a sort of a man." she finished. Then fell silent.

Though she thought to herself "It could have sent him, or just possibly a random teleportation between the realities went seriously wrong."

"Neither of those things" came the response "I am Thor of Asgard and I have come here deliberately."

The woman form was silent for a moment. "I have heard of you mighty one, who, either before, in, or after time has not heard of the son of Allfather Odin?"

As she finished, a storm not of Thor's own making, began to gather in the nothingness that surrounded the small

isthmus. The small cottage looked inconceivably frail beside it.

The woman form looked not at all surprised. "The storm is part of a cycle of torment to which we are subjected here," she explained.

"For all of Eternity," replied Thor knowingly.

"We are beyond Eternity here," came the woman form's response etched in inconceivable bitterness "beyond time, beyond any and all of the realities."

"I know that," said Thor.

Yet the storm did not gather with the intensity that it always had. Something held it in check.

The woman form pointed to what appeared to be a deep well at the very edge of the isthmus. The god of Thunder had not noticed it earlier. "It is a limitless reservoir of mystical anti-energy," she said "and will just go on fuelling the storm, giving it however much power is needed to overcome you. Best to let the storm come now, if you persist, you will alert It and it will come here."

"It is my intent to persist," said Thor.

The son of Odin stepped closer to the woman form and boy child touching them both at the same time. With the merest caress he took from them all the pain, all the fear, all the infirmity, all the hopelessness, all of the endless agony they had endured. The woman form stood to her full height. Thor saw that unshackled from the pain, and fear she was beautiful beyond even his experience. The boy child too now seemed less of a boy and more of a young man.

"It will come now," she said "you have done the unthinkable."

"Let It come," said Thor and she saw that he meant this

"I am known as Childuvgod," said the woman. "All that you see here is a construct designed to imprison and torment me, us," she corrected herself. "My father was It's greatest enemy. My father's demise was not enough for It. Its desire for revenge is without limitation."

"The boy child?" enquired Thor. "The boy is Its child," she replied "A part of It's revenge." She was pleased though at Thor's question which revealed he was not entirely omniscient. That there were at least some things he did not know.

"It destroyed even Asgard," she whispered in her strange form of communication. "The ancient histories say your father fought magnificently, coming close to defeating It" "Asgard lives on through me," said Thor. "Ever since its destruction I have sought It out. In the end, I came here, where I knew It could no longer avoid me."

"You are just one Asgardian god," said Childuvgod though not unkindly "while It destroyed your entire race." Oddly, unexpectedly to Thor, Childuvgod started to cry, the boy child, now man boy coming to her side.

"The power of Asgard can never be truly destroyed," said Thor "though it may take different forms. When I said that my race lives on through me, I meant exactly that. All of Asgard's great power, including my father's power is at my disposal."

Childuvgod stopped crying and looked up at Thor. The storm started again this time with far greater intensity. It had come.

In all of his vast travels, through the Multiverse and through time, Thor of Asgard had never encountered such a storm. Even he and Odin combining together had not produced anything as fearsome as this. He wondered if here in this place beyond time he could control it.

It remained within the bowels of the storm that had preceded It. Even Thor could not yet perceive It's chosen form.

"You have no place here little god!" came the mind shattering message using the same method of communication as Childuvgod. Thor had analyzed it. Part sound, part telepathic, part reaching to the soul itself.

“Where else was I to find you?” came the steely response from the Odinson “at every turn you have avoided the inevitable.” “Slinking away up time, or to some obscure dimension, or reality. I thought” continued Thor “that you would at least stay to confront me in the Dark Galaxies, where I undid so much of your handiwork. Even when I fully restored the great race of the Tolden, doing for them what I could not do for my own race, still you would not confront me.”

It emerged from the centre of the storm. Though It could assume any form that chosen at this moment was the form that had most commonly been used by God. Humanities God.

“You take my fathers form!” screamed Childuvgod

“He has no need of it” It replied.

It turned it’s attention to Thor and there was great anger upon It. “This is the most sacred place imaginable, where my lover and child live, and where, on occasion, I visit. No one, nothing may come this way, to disturb them here.”

“A place of imprisonment, of endless fear, pain and humiliation,” responded Thor, “a living monument to a desire for revenge that has transcended even time itself.”

“There need not be conflict between us, little god,” said It, It’s anger seeming to subside “leave us now, pursue me no further, return to time and live.”

Thor’s mind raced. He remembered so long ago returning to an Asgard not merely destroyed but physically totally obliterated. Though even then he saw the his father’s power reforming in the swirling debris. Thor remembered traveling far up time. Of discovering the then deep mystery of the disappearance of all humanity. Humanity that had spread among myriad galaxies and even into other dimensions. Humanity in all its wonderful and varied forms that seemed to have been totally expunged. He saw too that God himself had been killed. An essential prerequisite to sealing

humanities fate. Realizations that had ultimately led Thor here.

It had been God who looked over far flung humanity that It had viewed as It's greatest enemy. In the It had resorted to lies, trickery and deceit to achieve victory, since a more direct approach would have failed.

"Let me see if I have this right," came Thor's unfaltering communication "You killed God, you removed all of humanity from the upper regions of time, consolidating them into a single entity, namely Childuvgod, which you then raped. Childuvgod had a child by you and to sustain your insatiable desire for revenge, you consigned both her and the child to imprisonment, fear, pain, humiliation, and suffering in this construct beyond time. Not to mention that you killed my father and destroyed Asgard, and you would like me to walk away from all of this?"

"The time for communication then is past" was all It/Him said.

Thor looked over at Childuvgod and the boy child, now man boy. He knew they were both inconceivably powerful entities in their own right. Only virtual omnipotence had kept them as they had been. In a conflict he knew who Childuvgod would side with. But what of the man boy? , the product of the forced rape of residual humanity by its greatest enemy. Would the boy child, now man boy have any allegiance to his father?

The battle between It, the embodiment of all the evil that ever was and the mighty Thor custodian of all the power of the greatest race of pantheon gods that ever strode the Multiverse, commenced on a purely physical level. But it could not long be contained as such.

Locked in an unbreakable embrace, alternating variously between physical and energy and other forms the two omnipotents traversed all known dimensions as their struggle took them down through all of time and to the time before time itself. They shone like two exploding super

Galaxies. Neither showed any apparent weakness or loss of power. Then the struggle continued back up through time and beyond it, back to Childuvgod and the man boy and the little isthmus in nothingness where it had started

Only then did they pull apart from one another.

During all of this and whether he needed it or not Thor knew that Childuvgod and the man boy had supported him. Their souls had been with him bathing his own in their supporting energies. If perhaps he had momentary doubts, they had been there to support him. Their own vast strengths galvanized by what they had endured. The boy child, become man boy, had clearly made his choice. And yes, he had a soul.

"We have accomplished nothing by this," said It "All is as it was."

"Not quite," smiled Thor, holding out his hand to Childuvgod. "It is time for you to return to your origins."

"What of my son?" she asked.

"There is a place for him too," replied Thor.

It that represents the embodiment of all the evil that has ever been, did nothing to prevent their departure.

Thor turned to It. "The power of Asgard, not least among that my father's power can never be truly destroyed, though it may take different forms. A fact that you no more understood than any other of our enemies."

As has ever been and will ever be, It will continue to seek to turn events to It's favor. As, ultimately, do we all. Yet if you are ever traveling far, far up time you will find the Multiverse replete with humankind in all its wonderful forms. You will also find it under the stewardship of two mighty guardians.

One of them is Thor the Mighty, warrior god, Lord of thunder, and the son of great Odin.

The other, no longer a boy child, or even man boy, is the full grown son of humanity.

End

Shall Asgard Survive

Asgard City - the Palace of Odin

Some time in the future

The chamber lay in the deepest and most inaccessible part of Odin's palace. First down interminable winding stone steps and then through a labyrinth of slowly descending ever narrowing corridors. Millennia ago Asgard's Liege had locked and barred the chamber with only the grand vizier as his witness. Incredibly no one had come to the chamber again, at least until now.

Nothing Asgardian, not even the Destroyer armour itself, had ever been made more secure than the contents of this chamber. An ancient spell placed upon the entrance door and huge lock made them and the walls around them impervious to physical attack. The same potent spell had also made the chamber proof against even the most persistent interdimensional intruder. The spell was not just to keep intruders out but also to keep something else in.

The weapon lying so long in the chamber had only ever been used once on that fateful day when the evil aspect of Infinity had foolishly sought to challenge Odin's supremacy over the heavens. Odin had hoped it would never be used again, though he could not bring himself to destroy that which he played a part in creating. Possibly the weapon could no longer be destroyed by anyone.

Legend had it that of all the Asgardians who had ever lived only Odin in his prime could safely wield the great weapon though when the time came to use it even he had struggled not to be seduced by it. At a later time Odin had created enchanted wrist bracelets intended to make it possible for his son to wield the weapon if this became necessary. Later still Odin had told Thor of the weapon.

Now on the eve of Asgard's darkest ever hour the huge chamber door lay open. Thor now the Lord of all Asgard stood just outside. A magnificent two bladed axe untarnished by age and with its blade shining far brighter

than any ambient light would allow was just inside the chamber. The OdinAxe just as it must have been when first created. It was held in some form of casing of enchanted metal and heavy oak and surrounded by a containment field but as Thor looked on the wood and metal vaporised and the energy containment field dissipated. In its present form the OdinAxe was a little too large for an Asgardian god to wield comfortably, though it could assume any size that its wielder chose. No longer contained the axe remained in a levitated position about six feet above ground level.

Thor was reminded momentarily of other axes he had either seen or heard of such as Skurge's axe and the axes of the former heralds of Galactus, Terrax and Morg. But these all paled into insignificance beside this magnificent weapon. Lord Thor moved into the chamber and without any prompting on his part the great axe flew into his hand and reduced to a more comfortable size. Thor sensed immediately the seductive evil in the axe. Odin had warned him of this.

As possessor of both the Odinpowers and the Rune Magics Thor was now perhaps more powerful than even his father had been, save possibly Odin at his prime during the great Silver Age. Even so caution had dictated that the Odinson use the enchanted wrist bracelets as his father had intended.

Even with the dampening effect of the bracelets Thor could feel the aggressive influence of the axe trying to exert dominance over him. It was stronger than the innate will of the destroyer construct had ever been.

Thor pondered on why a creation of Odin's could be so seductively evil, but then remembered his father's words as if they had been spoken yesterday. With all of the nine worlds and much more under threat from Infinity, Odin had temporarily allied himself with the elemental beings Ymir and Surtur. The axe was a creation of all three of them and certain other forces that had existed at that time. Thus it

contained an element of evil, though ultimately it had served its purpose.

As Thor moved up into the light of day with axe in hand he sensed it drawing ambient energy from its surroundings and willed it to stop. Thor decided to “trial” the axe but not in Asgard itself.

Deep Space

In an uninhabited star system Thor threw the axe at near light speed straight through the systems yellow sun. The axe returned dutifully to Thor's hand and was not even warm to the touch. During the second or two that it had taken to pass through the sun the axe had, without Thors bidding, greedily absorbed much of the sun's energy leaving the star a pale imitation of it's former self - much reduced in size and luminosity.

Thor then prepared to carry out a further "test" with the intent of using the axe to take the energies from a relatively nearby star about to go nova and teleporting them to several relatively close yet dying stars. Thus breathing fresh life into them. However before the test was complete an unseen and undetected force smashed the axe from Thors grip and gathered it up. Then taking control of the axe it unleashed the full force of the super novae directly at Thor.

Possessed of both the OdinPower and the Rune Magics it is highly unlikely that the mighty Thor could be injured by a super nova explosion. However with the possibility that the axe's usurper had added unknown energies of its own the son of Odin opted for caution. Thor did two things in the mere moment of time available to him. First he teleported a modest distance away to reduce the impact of the supernova energies and second he used his hammer boosted by the Odinpower to erect a most formidable force shield about him. . It may seem odd that possessed of all the OdinPower Thor would still use his hammer but the bond between them was so strong that it was unlikely he would ever cease to carry it with him.

Thors precautions proved more than sufficient as the Thunder God tensed for an anticipated second assault. It did

not come immediately. If the attacker thought that gaining mastery of the OdinAxe would be a simple matter it severely underestimated the weapon. As Thor watched on the aggressor was clearly distracted as it struggled to assert control over the great axe.

Thor's assailant struggled mightily to control the OdinAxe. At the time of its creation the Axe was programmed only to accept control from Odin or (possibly and at a later time) Thor. The Thunder god being a mere stripling at that time. Even then the axe would only submit if their will was strong enough. Millennia ago the axe had still sought to seduce Odin when he employed it, and other things, to turn aside the evil aspect of Infinity. Most recently the axe had also sought to exert dominance over the mighty Thor but had begrudgingly recognised the Odinson as its master. In this regard the dampening effect of the wrist bands Odin had made for Thor long ago were helpful though not decisive. Thor's assailant knew the history of the axe as he had been there and played a part in its creation. Not unreasonably therefore, he expected to be able to exert his influence over it. But it was not to be. Responding to the desperate need of the time both Surtur and Ymir and others now thought long gone had played a part in the axes creation. Nonetheless it was Odin's enchantments that had been predominant. Thor thought that Surtur looked somehow different. It had certainly been a very long time. Set in the elemental's forehead was a gem that Thor knew to be the power infinity gem – one of those gems that made up the Infinity gauntlet. But it was more than his – Surtur had surprised Thor in obtaining the OdinAxe and the fire giant had not been known for stealth in times past. On Surtur's back was a huge sword that could only have been the mystical Twilight – sword of legend. In Surtur's grip the OdinAxe had grown greatly in size though whether this was of Surtur's or the Axe's own doing

was unclear. Then the Axe began to glow first red hot, then white hot, then into incandescence and then beyond reaching temperatures in excess of anything naturally occurring. Temperatures at which even the most powerfully enchanted metals should be vaporised. It seemed an odd thing thought Thor since one such as Surtur was a creature of fire and used to intense heat. Still perhaps even an elemental fire demon had its limits, temperatures at which even it could be uncomfortable.

At that moment Thor threw his hammer the mighty Mjolnir directly at Surtur's hand. It had been some time since the Lord of Asgard had thrown the hammer in anger and he rejoiced in it. Also seeing no reason to hold back he threw the hammer with the full force of the OdinPower behind it. Surtur cried out in pain momentarily releasing his grip on the OdinAxe. Whether this was due to the force of mjolnir's impact or the heat generated by the OdinAxe or a combination of both was unclear. The OdinAxe moved like a thing alive. Spinning about with the middle of its shaft as an axis the Axe spun so quickly that it formed a hemisphere of pure raw sharpness and unequalled cutting power. Surtur sought to brush it aside with his huge tail but instead cried out in pain for a second time as his great tail was completely shredded.

When Odin and others created the axe it was intended to cut through any known physical object enchanted or otherwise. Though advance sciences had created new metals since that time there still existed no physical object that could resist the axes cutting power. The thickest Adamantium might as well have been hot butter to the Axe of Odin. It had even been created to slice through energy fields.

Giving up, at least for the moment, on the OdinAxe Surtur noticed that the hammer of Thor had been thrown with such force that after hitting him it had travelled a very great distance. It was now returning to its master on a curved

path avoiding going too close to Surtur. The elemental saw his chance and sought to draw the hammer towards him. Mjolnir continued to return to its master but at much reduced speed as Surtur drawing increasingly on the power infinity gem sought to gather it for himself. As Surtur drew evermore on the power gem Mjolnir's speed became painstakingly slow.

Is there a power anywhere in the Universe that is so great that it can keep the hammer of Thor apart from its master? Particularly when its master is possessed of both the OdinPower and the Rune Magics? If there is such a power it would need to be greater than even the apocalyptic power of Surtur utilising the power infinity gem. A power which proved unequal to the task. To put the matter beyond doubt Thor teleported the minor distance to his slow moving hammer to recover it.

Surtur was enraged at his lack of success. He grasped his great sword Twilight from behind his back. "Keep the disgusting axe" he yelled "and your insignificant hammer." "What need have I of them when I wield the greatest sword in all existence?"

Sheathing mjolnir in straps on his back Thor grasped the OdinAxe in both hands and for the first time in the battle mystically increased his size to equal Surtur's 1,000 feet. At Thor's mental instruction the OdinAxe increased its size correspondingly.

Drawing without reservation on the power infinity gem the giant elemental thrust at Thor with the legendary sword spoken of only in whispers throughout more than one Universe. The inconceivably powerful OdinAxe sentient in its own right lashed against the great sword Twilight. Both Thor and Surtur held firm. The two huge and powerful frames locked together as Surtur kept on drawing on the power infinity gem.

But the first to give was neither Surtur nor Thor and most certainly not the magnificent OdinAxe. As Thor and Surtur

thrust at each other again and as OdinAxe and Twilight struck each other with galaxy shattering force small cracks and fissures began to appear in the great sword. As sword and axe clashed against each other again with the same galaxy shattering might Twilight finally shattered.

Surtur looked on at Thor with pure malevolence. "Do not think that because you long ago broke the cycle and the dominance of those who lived above in shadow that the enmity between us is over" said Surtur. "That we both ultimately survived the Asgardian Ragnorak does not put an end to the hatred I bear you, not a thousand Ragnorak's would do that." "I came to destroy you son of Odin, while you were far distant from Asgard." continued Surtur "and to take that which I played a part in creating."

"I have been gone long and have learned much in that extra-dimensional place you know only as the "fires of evil" but it is time for me and my allies and followers, both new and old, to return to the Asgardian plane." threatened Surtur "there to reside once more." When Thor recreated Asgard and eventually several others of the nine worlds a new Muspelheim certainly did not feature in his plans.

Surtur left this fact unstated.

With that the monstrous elemental reformed the great sword and Thor noticed that he had totally regenerated his destroyed tail. Then Surtur left the field of battle teleporting away interdimensionally.

Thor returned to Asgard. His testing of the power of the OdinAxe had been more thorough than anticipated and the great axe had not been found wanting. Still he was troubled – the sword Twilight was capable of causing rifts in entire dimensions even without drawing on the power gem – had Surtur been holding back? – it didn't seem so.

Moreover Thor knew a little more of the extra-dimensional "fires of evil" than Surtur might realise. When in times past the son of Odin had sought out some of the Multiverse's most powerful god pantheons he had learned certain things

he would prefer not to have known. Thor shuddered, just for a moment.

The massive dimensional rift was clearly visible from Asgard. Through it poured a stream of fire and fire demons all heading to the vicinity of where the realm of Muspelheim had once been located. On the other side of the rift was the exultant fire giant Surtur, his sword Twilight raised high. Doubtless the elemental had used the monstrous weapon to create the rift.

There was nothing ordinary about the fires that poured through the rift. They were of mystical origins and as such needed neither combustible material, a minimum flash point nor a gaseous supporter of the combustion. More than this the fires were also both sentient and malevolent. Their core temperatures beyond what might have been encountered in the fires of the former realm of Muspelheim. Some of the accompanying fire demons were recognisable as followers of Surtur while others seemed to be of a somewhat different ilk. Larger and more powerful. To the casual observer Surtur's legions appeared subservient to the larger demons and even the fire giant himself did not seem to have full control over events.

Thor Lord of Asgard stood ready. In his hand one of the greatest weapons in existence - the fabled OdinAxe which once helped turn aside the evil aspect of Infinity itself. The son of Odin raised the great Axe and it immediately began absorbing most of the oncoming fires and many of the fire demons. Thor instructed the Axe to teleport the fires it had absorbed to pre-arranged extra-dimensional locations, several uninhabited star systems comprised of huge ice worlds of varying degrees of intense coldness. Thor felt the Axe becoming very hot though not beyond his ability to hold it. Indeed after millennia of inactivity the sentient axe seemed to be relishing the conflict.

Some of the fires and fire demons managed to escape the Axe's attentions but others of Asgard stood ready for them.

Among them the formidable Destroyer construct standing equal in height to Surtur and powered by the life forces of an unknown but large number of Asgardians. Thor's son from his giantess mistress Jarnsaxa, the mighty Magni, stood ready now holding his fathers hammer in hand. Thor thought that right about now he would have welcomed he support of the frost giant Ymir and his followers. But the elemental was long gone and in any case would never have sided with Asgard against Surtur.

When Thor broke the endless cycle of those who live above in shadow Surtur did not perish in the final battle. For a time he lay purposeless even semi-comatose in the great void. However he was eventually plucked from that place by those who inhabit the extra-dimensional place known as the fires of evil or sometimes the living fires of evil. At first Surtur found himself comfortable in this place among somewhat like minded entities. Still he was but one of a number of elemental fire beings of great power. Also the vast roiling sentient fires themselves proved somewhat intractable to total control. Even with his quiet recovery of the sword Twilight and acquisition of the formidable power infinity gem he was not able to fully and completely dominate this realm.

When Surtur decided to return to the Asgardian plane he found it difficult to fully extract himself from the fires of evil. Not entirely to his satisfaction, he was accompanied by some of the fire demon followers of another great fire elemental and these bore him no special allegiance.

The source from which the fires and demons came was an almost inexhaustible one and could supply far more material than was required just to recreate Muspelheim. Indeed a small part of these fires would be enough to consume and replace all that Thor had recreated. As Surtur saw the surge of fire and fire demons largely teleported away by means of the OdinAxe he called a temporary halt to the surge and the

fires and lesser fire demons obeyed him. Although the gaping dimensional rift remained open.

Still armed with Twilight and with the power infinity gem Surtur stepped through the rift to confront the mighty Thor. At that moment though Surtur sensed the disintegration energies building atop the visor of the Asgardian Destroyer construct. Since the Destroyer was a weapon created to slay Celestials he could hardly ignore it.

Drawing on the resources of the power infinity gem Surtur threw the huge Twilight sword at mind numbing speed and unerring accuracy directly at the Destroyer construct's visor. Almost at the exact same moment the Destroyer unleashed it's greatest weapon the fabled disintegration beam. Caught in the beam Surtur's sword was entirely disintegrated but not before it slightly unbalanced the Destroyer moving its head slightly such that the beam went awry smashing through the gaping maw of the dimensional rift.

Surtur just barely evaded the edge of the disintegration beam as it streamed past.

It is said that nothing can withstand the disintegration beam of Asgard's Destroyer construct and indeed very few things can. But as the disintegration energies crashed into the vast roiling mystical fires on the other side of the rift they seem to anger and excite the living fires rather than quell and destroy them. So much so that the fires and certain of the fire demons came on again through the dimensional rift even against Surtur's express will.

Seeing its error the Destroyer construct led by the life force of Baldur the brave ceased its onslaught – but too late!

Raising the magnificent OdinAxe again Thor called for Magni and the Destroyer to aid him. Together the threesome launched godblast against the rift which seemed to be growing in size every second. Magni using mjolnor, the Destroyer using the life forces of the gods that powered it and Thor employing a full OdinPower blast in unison with the OdinAxe. In mere moments the monstrous rift was sealed –

those coming through it pushed back to their side. The OdinAxe seemed to sing with raw power.

Even with the dimensional rift sealed Surtur, many fire demons and vast roiling masses of fire still existed on the Asgardian plane.

Holding the OdinAxe with both hands and at arms length Thor began to rotate at a speed defying description. All that could be seen was a blinding light of pure raw cutting power. In this form Thor launched into the remaining fire demons shredding all life from their impure forms and leaving only dispersed small non sentient fires.

The Destroyer, Magni and Thor all then turned their attention to a swordless Surtur. A further visor disintegration blast from the Destroyer was enjoined by bolts of anti-force from Magni and the full force of the Odinpowers launched through the OdinAxe from Thor. Is there an entity anywhere that could withstand an attack of such magnitude? Certainly not Surtur.

The remaining fires of evil that had accompanied Surtur turned even more malignant seeking to suffocate Thor, Magni and the Destroyer but at best they were a minor inconvenience and easily teleported away to distant ice worlds by a Magni needing no aid from his father.

So it was that the elemental being the fire giant Surtur was no more. The power infinity gem which he had used less than efficiently seemed to just float near where Surtur had been. The OdinAxe seemed to be manipulating it's master to move towards the gem. Now there was a thought - the OdinAxe with the power infinity gem embedded within it and wielded by the mighty Thor could any adversary stand against such force? But no, the gem would be returned to its rightful place - Thor of Asgard had no need of it.

When Thor had recreated some but not all of the worlds destroyed after Ragnarok he had been right not to recreate Muspelheim. In this new order there was no place for Surtur and his followers. If Surtur had not sought to return to the

Asgardian plane he could have lived on among the fires of evil a place to which he was well suited. His return to Asgard accompanied by malignant fires and fire demons assured his fate.

As to the OdinAxe, would the sentient weapon meekly consent to a long containment again? Would Thor have need of this weapon again? Should the great weapon be carried permanently by Thor and Magni become the permanent holder of Mjolnor? But a Thor without his hammer is not really Thor is he? End

Superman - A Herald of Galactus

Deep Space

Some time in the future

From aboard his Worldship in a vastly distant Galaxy, the great Galactus had watched with interest developments on the Earth and especially in New Asgard.

Over time he saw Lord Thor, growing in confidence and power, exercise a seemingly benevolent dominion over the Earth. Galactus saw also the decrease in the Earth's superpowered heroes and villains as older generations of them died off largely unreplaced. Not that these "insects" would ever trouble the world devourer but he noted how few entities were now left on Earth with any kind of special powers. Galactus had known of the "death" of Odin soon after its occurrence. Ever since that fateful day long ago when he had passed too close to Asgard, Galactus had decided to never again test the mettle or resolve of the Allfather. The still youthful and inexperienced son, a mere godling, was however another matter.

"If ever I am to claim the Earth, then it is now!" thought Galactus. "If I leave it for too long Lord Thor will become too powerful." "Even now he has begun to understand the Odinpower at a fundamental level and to progressively draw on his elder god inheritance – the vast powers of his mother Gaea." "A most potent combination" mused Galactus.

Though human concepts such as revenge are far below Galactus, still buried deep within him was the desire to finally devour the world which had given him so much trouble over so many years. It was not that he needed it as a source of sustenance, there were many suitable worlds, but consumption of the Earth had become symbolic for him. A matter of pride, if such a term could ever be applied to one such as he.

Watching from his Worldship Galactus took stock of the forces that Lord Thor might draw upon , the Destroyer Construct (once briefly one of his own heralds), Loki (possibly), Karnilla (possibly), Prince Magni and for that matter the bulk of the energies of the Asgardian dimension. It was Magni that concerned Galactus the most for in truth he was somewhat of an unknown quantity. Galactus saw that Magni had inherited not only the great strength of his father but the mystical ways of his mother the Enchantress. More importantly he had inherited elements of the powers of his most powerful grandparents Odin and Gaea. Finally Galactus saw that the youth was now the proud and worthy bearer of one of the greatest weapons in all of creation Mjolnir the former hammer of Thor.

"I shall need a Herald" thought Galactus "not for direction but as a source of distraction for both father and son." Galactus had in fact been heraldless for quite some time and he searched among the heavens for one suitable for the task. In that searching he came across the Kryptonian from an alternate Universe. A dangerously powerful herald but one who could serve him well, provided he were properly controlled. Though that very act of control might limit the Kryptonian's own initiative and resourcefulness

In his mind Galactus reviewed the powers of this ----- Superman. Vast speed, near invulnerability, a powerful heat vision, vast physical strength, vastly acute sight and hearing, super breath, super intelligence, great tactical capabilities and much more.

Galactus reviewed these capabilities against those known of Lord Thor and of Magni and he saw they might not be enough. Unaided Superman might not be able to stand against Magni and his hammer, and certainly not against

the Lord of All Asgard. But with the Kryptonian's own powers augmented by the power cosmic that would be a different matter entirely. The world destroyer then wrenched Superman from that alternate reality and bestowed upon him the power cosmic to a greater degree than he had for any previous heralds (even the Silver Surfer). For service to Galactus Superman was promised safe return to his own reality. However knowing the man of steel would never accept such an offer Galactus implanted a subtle telepathic suggestion in Superman's mind, making the offer seem more palatable.

The Lord of Asgard and Earth had long since detected the approach of Galactus Worldship. Magni asked Thor if he might choose to inhabit the Destroyer Armour against such an awesomely powerful opponent. Thor, somewhat enigmatically, declined the invitation. The thought never even occurred to Magni to use the armour himself. Though youthful and inexperienced Magni had a confidence in his own natural strength, in his hammer and in the other powers he inherited which was not entirely without justification. Nonetheless he had heard the stories of the great Galactus and like most Asgardians was somewhat in awe of him.

So it came to pass that enhanced by the power cosmic the new herald of Galactus the Superman from an alternate reality confronted Magni prince of Asgard and Earth, the true son of Thor - blood of the blood itself - and the strongest of all the gods of Asgard.

The power cosmic enhanced Superman struck the first blow - a combination of his searing heat vision and deadly cosmic energies. For all his durability Prince Magni felt pain but no lasting damage. He whirled his hammer to deflect both the heat vision and cosmic energy then changed tactics, absorbing the energies within his hammer and throwing them back multiplied many fold against Superman.

The Kryptonian also showed great durability, shrugging off the magnified energies and changing tactics he physically attacked Magni at enormous speed raining super powered blows upon the Thor Son at the rate of hundreds or blows per second.

Both Galactus and Lord Thor remained distant from the struggle as if somehow content to do battle by proxy. The former observing it from his approaching but still distant Worldship and the latter present only in the form of a large audio-visual image. Galactus fully expecting Thor himself to become embroiled. In viewing the image of Thor Galactus did note that the new Allfather had strapped across his back a weapon from antiquity – the rarely seen and even more rarely used OdinAxe. A weapon spoken of only in whispers among the great powers.

No one truly knows what happened that fateful day millennia ago when Galactus and Odin clashed, save the Allfather and the World Devourer themselves. Now Odin is dead, so they say, and Galactus keeps his own counsel. As his Worldship moved closer to the Magni/Superman clash Galactus mind turned briefly to his first and only encounter with Odin. Rumour has it that Galactus is the only entity to have felt the power of the OdinAxe and lived. Another rumour has it that Odin was forced to use the OdinAxe on that day lest all Asgard perish. While rumours of that confrontation are in abundance, facts are impossible to come by. Suffice it to say that Odin and Asgard survived that encounter as did the great Galactus.

Galactus turned his attention to the present. He saw that while Magni could not match Superman's physical speed he was able to twirl his hammer at such a speed and force that it connected with superman and sent him careening end over end for many kilometres through space. The blow also appeared to hurt superman sufficiently to slow him down somewhat. Magni then responded with a bolt of Asgardian anti-force but superman shrugged this off.

The two combatants moved in together gripping each others forearms and for a moment the battle became a test of purest strength. As limbs locked together as muscles bulged and strained they did seem to be of roughly equal strength. Both strove mightily to assert their dominance in purely physical terms. Neither appeared to be holding back in any way. Whether it was from impatience or a sense that their natural strength was not quite enough first one of them then the other sought to augment their strength. Superman through the power cosmic and Magni through mystical means. As they continued their test of strength now at augmented levels the outcome remained inconclusive.

Superman was the first to break free from the impasse resorting to his great speed in combination with his strength rather than strength alone.

Magni then hurled his hammer coruscating with bludgeoning Asgardian energies. He threw it so hard and so fast and with such unerring accuracy that even Superman, momentarily wearied by the physical test of strength, did not move quickly enough to avoid it. The Kryptonian reeled from the full force of mjolnor thrown with every ounce of the still augmented strength of Magni. Magni moved in hitting Superman time and again with blow after blow from his great hammer. Superman used the power cosmic to establish a personal force field but even that in combination with his vast durability did not seem to be enough. Reeling under the assault the kryptonian sped away from the battle just to give himself a few moments of desperately needed time-out.

Relentlessly Magni pursued his opponent trying not to allow him any time for respite. Recognising that most forms of energy assault would not prevail against Superman Magni resorted to an unusual form of attack. A low level godblast

delivered in rapid pulses rather than as a torrent of energy. He had used it before – it was less draining than a full high level godblast and more effective than anti-force.

Galactus had thought that by now Magni would be close to defeat and Thor himself would have entered the conflict. Thus at the very same moment as Magni commenced his pulsating godblast attack the destroyer of worlds amplified Superman's power cosmic level.

Unaware of this Magni saw with surprise that Superman was shrugging off his assault with apparent ease. A renewed and invigorated superman surrounded himself with a tight fitting force field energized by the power cosmic. He then launched himself at his foeman using perhaps his greatest weapon, his indescribable speed.

Somehow Magni sensed this coming just before it happened and drawing on elements of his mothers but more importantly his grandfathers powers passed on to him he mystically increased his own speed. It was enough just barely to react to the Kryptonian's speed.

At a speed defying description the fist of the nearly invulnerable onrushing Superman met the head of Mjolnor the hammer of Magni swung with all the force that the Earth/Asgard Prince could muster. The impact of the collision surprised even Thor and Galactus now both physically on the field of battle. Which of these fared worse – the immovable force or the irresistible object – hammer or fist? Suffice to say after some alteration in it's course great Mjolnor returned to Magni and Superman was left clutching his right hand experiencing a level of pain heretofore beyond his experience.

For the second time in the battle the great Galactus increased the cosmic power level of Superman. The pain in the kryptonian's right hand disappeared immediately. He turned around and there was a look in his eye as he drunk in

the power cosmic. There was nothing good or noble in that look.

“ You have gone too far Galactus, I can no longer brook of your continuing interference while I stay my own hand” boomed Thor. With that the son of Odin and father of Magni drew forth the OdinAxe. “You survived this axe once Galactus, let us see if you can do so again!”

For Magni his father bestowed him a temporary gift – not an increase in strength or power as such, though doubtless worth more than that. No Thor bestowed upon Magni for the duration of the continuing battle all of the many thousands of years of his own hardened battle experience. The battle experience of the greatest warrior of all time!

Thor recognized the look in Superman’s eyes. He had seen it before with the cosmic malfunctions - a polite euphemism for the failures of Galactus. Everyone knew of course of the great heralds such as the magnificent Silver Surfer, Nova, Air-Walker and others. But few knew of the failures - entities who had absorbed too much of the power cosmic and that had subsequently gone quite mad. Nor had Galactus subsequent removal of the power cosmic helped these poor entities as the madness had remained. Death following soon afterwards. Lord Thor had known specifically of two such but there were whispers of another.

Galactus had now suffused Superman with too much of the power cosmic that much was clear. Though not exactly the same thing it could bear some comparison to the Asgardian warriors madness. Thor saw the fundamental goodness in Superman and hoped he could in some way be saved.

Literally bursting at the seams with the power cosmic and totally enraged with the madness upon him Superman bore down upon Magni at a speed even greater than normal. The force of Superman’s blow to Magni’s chin could be felt everywhere upon the Earth thousands of kilometres below. Magni was hurt by the blow which sent him hurtling towards the Earth – but he knew to go with the force of the blow. To

allow himself to recover from it. Never in all his experiences had he felt quite such a blow but even so it did him no permanent damage and his instinct was only to get right back at Superman.

The maddened Superman his strength continuing to be greatly augmented through the power cosmic then thrust at Lord Thor himself seeking to wrest the OdinAxe from its master. If it is true that there is almost no force that can separate Magni from Mjolnir then it is assuredly even more true that no power may separate Thor from the OdinAxe unless the Lord of Asgard so wishes. After a time of scuffling with Lord Thor, the hopelessness of his task became apparent to the enraged Kryptonian. Patiently one of the Multiverse's most powerful skyfathers pulled the axe from Superman's grasp and smashed him away with the flat broad side of the blade careful not introduce the Kryptonian to its unthinkably sharp edge. Superman only came back at Thor with even greater speed and the Lord of Asgard and Earth realized he needed to slow the speedster in order to affect his plan.

If not exactly the distraction Galactus had intended this served its purpose as the devourer proceeded down to the Earth momentarily unchallenged.

In a valiant though somewhat ill conceived effort the Warriors Three, Lady Sif, Balder, Heimdall, Thialfi and several other Asgardians approached Galactus their life forces empowering the destroyer construct. Even as disintegration energies began to build atop the destroyers visor cosmic energies from Galactus eyes lanced into areas of New Asgard dangerously close to their physical bodies and in one case too close. The stalwarts withdrew from the construct and Galactus swatted away the now inert Asgardian destroyer.

As the world devourer approached the outer edge of the Earth's atmosphere he was suddenly hit with the full force of an Asgardian godblast. Magni from New Asgard below had

very quickly constructed a brace to hold his hammer. Allowing his life force to become as one with the hammer supreme he directed the torrent against Galactus bathing him in Asgardian energies. The godblast of Magni seemed to trouble Galactus as the titan held up his forearm to his face but it did not stop the titan nor even appreciably slow him down. In an eerie sight with a tidal wave of energy lashing about him Galactus began his descent through Earth's atmosphere.

For the merest of moments Galactus seemed indecisive as he continued to descend through the upper layers of the Earth's atmosphere bathed in the fearsome and indeed awe-inspiring energies of Magni's unfettered godblast. Then as if coming to a decision he raised his hand and massive bolts of concussive force took form outside of the confines of the godblast energies. At the speed of thought they shot earthward curving around the extremities of Magni's godblast and temporarily laying him low. Galactus however did not emerge unscathed, his helmet was missing possibly destroyed, his armour blackened, pitted and heavily scorched. For the merest moment he looked shaken both in his confidence and physically. Though this was only ephemeral.

Thor could have ended the contestation with Superman at any point but he had wanted to save the Kryptonian if possible. The new Allfather found the most effective way to negate Superman's great speed was to slow time around him. This done Thor then raised the OdinAxe and commanded it to gently and slowly take the power cosmic from Superman. Several things had worked in Superman's favour not the least that he was a very powerful entity in his own right unlike some of the earlier heralds of Galactus. It took some time that could be ill afforded but under Thor's strong direction the OdinAxe took from Superman all of the power cosmic with which Galactus had imbued him. Most importantly the man of steel was whole and himself again.

Again momentarily unopposed the world eater began the process of assembling his elemental converter. However both Thor and a recovered Superman, their differences resolved" were quick to confront him. Superman, enraged by Galactus treatment of him began at super speed smashing the devourer's partially assembled elemental converter. Yet, for all that rage, Galactus raised a hand and froze the Kryptonian motionless as if he had been placed in a stasis block though none was evident.

Magni came running to the confrontation but in truth still seemed heavily drained by his godblast efforts and concussed by Galactus mighty blow. Lord Thor had mystically increased his height to match Galactus current size.

So it was then that the two titans Thor and Galactus stood toe to toe. Thor, Odinson, Lord of New Asgard and indeed all Earth, probably the most powerful skyfather in the Multiverse. Then the great Galactus ravager of countless worlds and the third force in the Universe whose siblings were no less than Mistress Death and great Eternity themselves. Godly mystical powers in abundance ranged against what Odin had described long ago as a cosmic force of nature.

Suddenly our small world, this island Earth of ours, seemed very small and very fragile. Could it survive even the first stages of an encounter between these two titans? It seemed for a moment at least that the entire Universe held its breath.

Thor could hardly contain the OdinAxe. It grew very hot, brilliant white rather than its usual silver grey colour and Asgardian and other arcane energies coruscated back and forth along its entire length. Thor felt it urging him to strike Galactus down. Imperiously, almost contemptuously Galactus drew forth from the Axe the power cosmic that had been drained from Superman. The Axe grew ever more agitated.

“I know of this little one” said Galactus looking towards the OdinAxe “your father once used it against me” but any trace of contempt had gone from his voice.

For the merest moment Galactus looked indecisive as if weighing options then at almost uncanny indeed blinding speed he grasped part of the shaft of the Axe and sought to wrench it from Lord Thor. Billions of tons of earth below them immediately gave way under the initial impetus of their struggle as Thor sought to retain the Axe. Fleeting Galactus wondered if it were a trivial attempt by Gaea to assist her son but it was simply a matter of physics in operation.

In the next moment the two titans were flying through space and time locked together as they continued to struggle for the OdinAxe. Thor seemed unable to break Galactus grip and the world destroyer seemed equally unable to wrest the axe from Thor. Mystical energies competed with the power cosmic and at times seemed to almost merge with and become one with the power cosmic. To any capable of observing them they must have seemed like a blazing star hurtling through the heavens except that this “star” knew no constraints as to distance and time nor even as to interdimensional travel.

It has been said that Odin weakened the longer he might be away from Asgard but that the same does not apply to Thor. Just one of Odin’s reasons for long ago creating the OdinAxe was that it would always enable him to draw on those nearly inexhaustible reservoirs of Asgardian energy wherever he might be in the Multiverse. Thus as Galactus drew as required from various energy sources that they passed near so Thor in turn drew via the OdinAxe on the vast reservoirs of Asgardian energy that exist in and around New Asgard and in certain other places.

At one point the path of the two titans and the axe led into the very core of Balderon largest of all the black holes of the Multiverse where they slowed under the most immense

naturally occurring gravitational pull in existence. In this place Galactus released his grip on the axe and left the immediate vicinity of the black hole curious to see if Thor could escape it. If the world eater seriously thought that victory could be achieved in such a cheap fashion he was sadly mistaken as the Odinson emerged from the phenomenon moments later.

Again Galactus grasped the Axe clearly thinking that wresting it from Thor was the key to defeating the Thunderer. Their journey through space and time continued. There is a phenomenon not often encountered in the Marvel Multiverse. It is similar to a black hole but its pull extends across all known dimensions. Anything held in its super gravitational pull is drawn into it and if it survives at all is thrown out into the ethereal void beyond the Multiverse. No one has as yet provided a name for this perhaps the greatest of all the Multiverse's natural phenomena since from the reference point of any particular dimension it seems only like an ordinary black hole. Whether unknowingly or otherwise Thor and Galactus sped directly into one such. The forces acting upon them to expel them from the Multiverse were so great that for the merest instant they were forced to cooperate in order to escape those forces. It was a sobering experience for them both. At some point in their continuing journey Galactus and Thor began probing then actually entering each others mindscapes raising their struggle to a different level. The struggle moved from one mindscape to another. If Galactus found Thor's mindscape unusual Thor found the mindscape of Galactus utterly alien and difficult to deal with. The struggle within the mindscapes seemed very physical in nature. Thor swung with the OdinAxe and though Galactus sought to avoid it the fearsome axe seemed to effortlessly rip not only through any personal force fields but also to rip away chest armour. When Galactus was in Thor's mindscape

he was on the offensive and in his own he was on the defensive.

At one point Thor shouldered the OdinAxe and fists balled and coruscating with energy he traded blows with Galactus for what seemed like all Eternity. The pain and tiredness both felt from the mental confrontation seemed every bit as real as if it were a purely physical contest. Eventually with Galactus on the attack in Thor's mindscape the Thunderer landed a blow of such staggering might that Galactus found himself back in his own mindscape.

The battle continued to rage. Thor with his hands about the devourer's throat and Galactus responding with lancing beams of the power cosmic directly from his eyes into Thors face.

Exactly when the conflict of the minds ceased and gave way to a purely physical confrontation seemed unclear. However at some point it became evident to both combatants that not only had their battle returned to the physical level but that their long journey had ceased. They were somewhere in the Andromeda Galaxy in our time.

Still the struggle continued unabated though the pain and the tiredness they had felt in the mindscapes continued into this physical contestation.

Galactus, perhaps sensing something, made one last mighty grasp for the OdinAxe. Thor felt his heart pound, his eyes bulged, every muscle in his body aching with pain strained to the limit. Something had to give and it did as he broke Galactus grip on the axe and in doing so hurled the titan toward a nearby sun. For whatever reason, and perhaps it was simple tiredness, Galactus was quite slow in returning. Thor feeling close to exhaustion, even though he was continuing to tap via the OdinAxe into Asgardian energy reserves, was uncertain as to Galactus condition.

The Thunderer decided to end it quickly if this was possible. With the OdinAxe held firm he took perhaps the dangerous step of allowing his life force to become as one with the axe

supreme. For a fleeting moment the axe attempted to take control but asserting himself Thor directed the resultant god/axe blast energies out against Galactus.

Galactus though near exhaustion refused to yield holding up his forearm against the blast as it smashed away his residual force fields and stripped him of what was left of his armour. Still the titan would not yield eventually changing into his energy cloud form.

In this form Galactus moved threateningly towards Thor but then moved away slightly and began to disperse. Galactus was still clearly sentient in this form. For his part Thor was totally drained but sensed the energy cloud form of Galactus was at very low energy levels. It was at that moment that the mighty Thor sensed the distant presence of Galactus siblings Death and great Eternity. They seemed to present no overt or even covert threat but mayhap were there just as a reminder of Galactus place in the Universe. Thor decided to let it end there. Just before parting he noticed the energy cloud moving off in need of substantial sustenance.

Whether this now meant that Galactus would no longer trouble the Earth or that he would now even more embittered was impossible to say. Perhaps Thor had made a mistake today.

On his return to Earth Thor saw that Superman and Magni had overcome the stasis block effect Galactus had imposed on Superman.

Allfather Thor returned Superman to his own reality the latter full of appropriate for the power of New Asgard. 'I wonder if I had encountered him in my own youth' thought Thor "how I myself devoid of the OdinPower might have fared against him?"

Magni's unfettered godblast had inevitably done damage to the Earth but acting in unison with his grandmother Gaea, Magni had already healed it.

End

Dark Father

The almost countless realities were converging on one another at an alarming rate.

As reality crunched upon reality only the strongest of them survived. These were the realities with sufficient great powers acting in unison to protect them. Such as our own reality.

Another reality though was also prevailing. It did not have large numbers of great powers. Only one great power really. The oldest still existing entity among all the realities. He who was known as the Dark Father.

Dark father was the ultimate manipulator of realities. He was counterbalanced but barely by a loose association of great powers from all the major realities. These included the Living Tribunal, Eternity, Infinity, Odin the All Mighty and others unknown and unknowable to such as we.

Some thought that the Dark Father had caused the convergence of realities. But it was a natural phenomenon. He did however gladly hasten it along.

None of the great powers in any of the realities looked to help from he who was once above us all. They knew that entity no longer existed. Long millennia ago the creator had dispersed the goodness that was him among almost all the realities.

It was disquieting for those that knew the truth of it. While he who was above us all no longer existed, his dark counterpart the anti-God lived on. Dark father was and is the anti-God. The darkest one of all did not seek dominion over all the realities. For long millennia he was content to rule his own reality. In that dark place no one challenged him. Neither from within nor from without. From time to time he toyed with other realities manipulating them almost at will. At least until the loose association of great powers of all the other realities partially countered him.

The form almost always taken by Dark Father, bore remarkable similarity to Allfather Odin, liege lord of Asgard. The rumour still whispered by the few was that Odin and all things Asgardian were but a creation long ago of Dark Father when he entered our reality. An experiment, a dabbling by the darkest lord of all in the lighter magics, a rare use of more benign mystical powers. The rumour had it that at a point in time a mature Odin was created along with other Asgardians and complete with memories of a rich glorious past that were a total fabrication. Those that held to this view argued that the memories of all who might otherwise know the truth were altered so that the true origins of Asgard would never be known. Save perhaps the Living Tribunal.

Before all others, even Odin himself, Dark Father saw that the continuing convergence of the realities would lead to only two remaining realities ours and its.

Even if Asgard was naught but a distant past creation of the Dark Father it had surely evolved and long since taken its own direction in the affairs of the Multiverse. Or had the Dark Father implanted suggestions in the mind of his greatest creation that would forever bring mighty Odin within his thrall when he so desired? These doubts persisted with just a few among the great powers of the realities. Still everything that had happened since this theoretical time seemed to give the lie to the rumours.

Only the inevitable coming battle between Odin, Thor and the Dark Father would yield the truth ripping it away from the rumours and fabrications for all to see.

With the accelerating convergence of all the remaining realities the protection of our own reality power occupied all the great efforts of Odin, Eternity, Infinity, Galactus and our other great powers. The Dark Father protected his own reality but still had time for forays into and the manipulation of various other realities.

Among these forays the anti-God found time to visit golden Asgard while Odin was elsewhere.

Asgard

The huge ethereal image of what seemed to be two eyes formed imperceptibly far above Asgard City. At first the image even managed to elude Heimdall's famed sensory capabilities.

When his senses were finally aroused Heimdall trumpeted the alarm as dark energies designed to incinerate all of Asgard in milli-seconds lanced from the eyes and met _____ unexpected resistance. Odin's son an entity that Dark Father had deemed unworthy of consideration had rotated his hammer at near infinite speed creating a shield not just about his person but protecting all of continental Asgard. The seldom spoken of Shield of Thor effect said to be the equal of the Odin Shield itself.

Dark Father knew little of the Odinson. Like some other enemies of Asgard he assumed that all the power of Asgard flowed from Odin and that nothing else Asgardian mattered. Thus was Dark Father denied the quick and cheap victory he had anticipated in the temporary absence of Allfather Odin. Still the darkest one of all pressed the attack. With the Thor shield created and fully in place Thor ceased rotating his hammer and began using it to absorb the dark energies that were already starting to leak through cracks and fissures appearing all over the shield.

With his initial attack slowed if not thwarted and aware that Almighty Odin was only moments away the frustrated anti-God raised the stakes.

A giant wraithlike hand reached right through the crunching, converging realities seeking to grasp all of Asgard, wrench it away from our own reality and transport it to Dark Father's own reality. In that place surely even Odin himself could not protect it.

As the mighty Thor struggled to keep Asgard in our reality, Odin and Infinity arrived. Dark Father ceased his attack and

retreated immediately. Now was not the time for a confrontation with Odin. Also the unanticipated power of Thor was troubling him.

Although Dark Father had now departed some of the dark energies absorbed in the head of mjolnir did not immediately follow its master. Not for the first time in his existence an element of evil resided in mighty Thors hammer. Thor moved to expel the evil but not before great Odin analysed the evil energies at a fundamental level.

"Interesting" said Infinity.

"Aye" replied Odin "it gives us an insight we never had before."

"If necessary you can synthesize it, even fuse it with other energies?" said Infinity.

"Synthesize it yes!" remarked Odin "but there is nothing the energies of evil can be fused with" Odin continued "always will they subsume anything they are merged with."

"We are hard pressed to protect our own reality" said Infinity "yet the anti-God seems to protect its own dark reality and still carry out its endless manipulations throughout the other realities." "Even during this time of convergence" finished Infinity.

"We need to distract it" said Odin "a distraction of such force and power that it is obliged to concentrate purely on its own reality." "Forced to cease its other reality manipulations and to cease its deliberate acceleration of the convergence." finished the Allfather.

"I saw that even it was taken aback by the power of your son!" said Infinity.

"Those who espouse evil usually are" said Odin.

When the myriad realities began to converge on one another it placed strains on the loose alliance of great powers that had heretofore partially countered Dark Father. It became a case of every reality for itself. With the alliance in tatters the anti-God was again free to manipulate all but the strongest realities. It troubled him not at all that the

realities were all converging on one another. Indeed he was accelerating the process. Nor did the convergence affect his ability to travel among the realities or be in many different realities at the same time.

The great powers of the realities, in a final meeting, agreed to Odin's request that the mighty Thor, enter the Dark Father reality, there to engage and distract it for as long as was possible. To give the Living Tribunal, Odin and other great powers time to reverse the reality convergence and something more.

Such was the supreme arrogance of the Dark Father that as the most powerful warrior god in all existences entered his reality the anti-God was not even present. It was simultaneously in dozens of other realities accelerating their destruction.

Dark Father could be forgiven for not anticipating the arrival of the son of Odin as no entity had willingly and knowingly entered this reality in long millennia.

As he entered the darkest reality of all, Thor was assailed by the all pervasive stench of pure evil. In some places it was so palpable as to take tangible forms. Among them slow moving morasses of highly viscous semi-liquid darkness to drown the noblest of souls and ice black lattices that cried out hatred beyond conception. Thor sensed also an ethereal flow of minute particles between areas of greater and lesser evil. Winds of evil of a sort.

Even with the darkest one of all briefly absent it was a place of constant danger. Limitless numbers of hate filled minions lurked, more detectable from their emanations of savage evil than their hidden physical presences. The threat of imminent attack was constant.

There was no light here as we understand it, though a god could see, after a fashion, using other methods.

Odin and Thors gambit had initial success. The anti-God withdrew from all the realities in which it was engaged choosing to confront Thor in its entirety. In part Dark Father

was angered at the unprecedented intrusion. More than this though, the slaying of the son of its greatest enemy was worthy of its undivided attention.

“You are more than foolhardy to have come little godling” boomed the darkest one of all “even your father cannot help you here” “You have come simply to die, and horribly at that.”

With that Dark Father almost disdainfully raised his hand and with a slight rotation of his wrist gestured towards a corner of this reality. From it came a host of enemies from Thors past: Surtur, Ymir, Dormammu, Perrikus of the Dark Gods, Thanos, Mangog and others.

All these entities were evil in their own right but here in this place every single one of them seemed more brutal more evil even than Thor remembered. They rushed on mass at Thor tearing at each other to be first to get at the Thunder God.

Dark Father watched on with what appeared to be genuine interest as to how Thor might deal with such seemingly overwhelming force.

He did not have to wait long. The son of Odin held on to his hammers thong as he spun about with it at near infinite speed. Then he called upon his own life force to be as one with the hammer supreme. The force field created by Thors spinning motion was replaced by an ever expanding sphere of godly energies. Outside of the expanding sphere of godblast energies lightning of a voltage hitherto unknown and anti-force energies crackled and raged. It was such an impressive sight that it gave even Dormammu pause. In this form Thor spun directly into the path of his past enemies, or Dark Fathers facsimile creations as seemed more likely. All of them perished in the onslaught.

If the Dark Lord was surprised at the speed and decisiveness of Thors victory against such an assemblage he showed no sign of it.

“As you are essentially a being much disposed to the physical” said Dark father “I will momentarily indulge you in this” With that the most powerful single entity in all the realities moved to engage the mighty Thor in close quarter combat.

As the two grappled Dark Father sought to incinerate Thor while holding him in its unbreakable grip. In truth the Odinson felt his own force field protection fail, he felt his clothing and armour burn from him. Mjolnir became pitted and cracked and he felt even his Asgardian flesh beginning to burn and fall away from his body. Some of his bones were showing. Despite this the god of thunder felt he was still very much in the fight. He felt that Dark Father was operating more against his mind than his body.

Time seemed to be elapsing differently in this reality. Thor felt that even if he held his ground against Dark Father for an eternity, in the realities beyond insufficient time would elapse for the great powers to execute Odin’s plan.

Feeling himself starting to lapse into unconsciousness Thor allowed himself to enter the briefest moment of controlled warriors madness. Gathering every muscle in his body Thor struck with the full force of the Thor blow.

For the first time in all eternity Dark Father cried out in pain and also for the first time in eternity his unbreakable grip was broken. At that point the Odin like form, the elaborate pretence, that Dark Father had adopted for so long began to dissipate and became one with the reality. At that moment the horrible truth that even Odin had not fully realized became apparent to Thor. The entire Dark Father reality was a single sentient being – the true Dark Father or anti-God. The mighty Thor, hammer in hand. readied himself as he came under attack from the entire living reality that was the true Dark Father.

Moments into the battle though, numerous converging realities came crashing into the Dark Father reality.

Led by Odin and the Living Tribunal, and with Dark Father otherwise occupied, the great powers of the surviving realities had sought to halt the continuing convergence of the realities. Although unable to accomplish this, they had been able to remove some of the central realities from the convergence process. Also they had altered the entire axis of convergence such that the remaining realities were all converging on the Dark Father reality.

The anti-God, totally occupied by its battle with Thor, had not perceived this until it was too late. It was caught in a moment of indecision. Whether a part of it should flee from the destruction or whether to go down fighting destroying as many other realities as it could in the process.

With the mighty Thor so close and other great powers blocking all avenues of partial escape the entire living reality that was Dark Father ceased to be. Totally crushed under the weight of the other realities converging upon it. Odin, Eternity, Infinity, and the Living Tribunal looked down upon the cauldron of destruction from one of the surviving high realities. Acting in unison they sought to retrieve the architect of victory from the annihilation. Their actions were not necessary.

Thor, Odinson already moved quietly among them.

End

The Dark Lightning

There seemed to be nothing to alleviate the darkness in this place. Even the energy discharges from the unending storms were dark. Evil of an intensity unknown elsewhere permeated every single aspect of existence here. Surely in all of the myriad alternate realities there was not a darker or more cheerless place.

It must have been all the more surprising then for the mighty Thor, as he stood atop the highest elevation in this world, to know that this reality was his father's creation. It had been a time long before Odin's and Gaea's productive union. A time when even Odin was yet young. In not his greatest moment the Lord of Asgard created an entire alternate reality intended as a permanent prison for the most profoundly evil entities and forces that sought the destruction of the Asgardian way of life. The prison was built not just with the traditional enemies of Asgard in mind but any others who might seek to challenge existence.

Utilizing his knowledge of the natural forces that bind all realities and with judicious use of the Odinance, the Allfather bound the new reality in such a way that no power placed within it should ever be able to escape its fate.

The motivating force for the creation of this reality was hatred – a hatred of evil and a desire to contain it. It was perhaps not surprising therefore that hatred was one of the primordial forces in the evolution of this reality.

Not long after the creation of the new reality, Asgard, indeed all of the nine worlds were beset by a series of crises. Odin's mind was on things other than his new creation.

Afterwards there was a long period of calm and the new creation slipped even further from the Allfather's mind.

At a later time still Odin began to utilize the limbo between dimensions as a prison for some that sought Asgard's

destruction. His earlier creation, a prison that was an entire reality, seemingly all but forgotten.

Elemental building blocks were present in Odin's creation and they grew unsupervised. Dark intelligences fuelled by hatred evolved and, in the absence of Odin's intervention, they inevitably took control.

From time to time the powers that evolved in and had taken control of this reality sought to breach Odin's barriers. That they might flood out into other realities. In this they were unsuccessful though they learned from each attempt. They had no access whatsoever to any of the other myriad realities. In a sense the only knowledge from beyond were small elements from Odin's mind that had filtered through during the act of creation. Nothing more than snippets really.

Thus it would not have been surprising to Odin had he ever troubled to come this way again that some aspects of this reality were modelled on Asgard and others of the nine worlds. Albeit in the darkest and most perverted way.

Atop the elevated place the mighty Thor now Lord of all Asgard looked across the darkness to a massive scarred fortress perched high atop a sheer cliff of tens of thousands of feet. It looked like a perversion of something from the Surtur wars. As a skyfather and one of the great powers of the Multiverse, Thor did not of course need light in order to see in this place.

Thor could sense that the real power in this reality emanated from the massive fortress. It must be aware of him but had not moved against him – yet.

“The very first thing I must do here,” thought Thor “is cast some physical light upon this reality.” Requiring more effort than he would have thought possible Thor called a halt to the endless discharges of black lightning about him and then called forth his own version of lightning.

In the intense brightness all manner of disgusting and revolting creatures scurried about looking for anywhere

amid the rocky landscape where they might seek relief from the blinding light. Then the black lightning came again and struggled for supremacy with Thor's white lightning. At the same time a single figure emerged from the huge fortress. Thor gasped.

As discharges of dark and white lightning competed for supremacy the figure emerging from the massive fortress could almost have been _____ Odin.

Well perhaps not exactly. It was clearly modelled on Odin. Bigger and younger but uglier more brutal, more savage, and with hatred etched into every inch of its face. As if somehow it had never wanted to be created. In some ways perhaps only a perverted caricature of the Allfather.

This need not have surprised the mighty Thor. Would it be so unthinkable for the greatest power in this alternate reality to have modelled itself (even if loosely) on the creator of its reality?

On his deathbed Odin had told Thor of this reality. He had asked his son to investigate it.

The manner in which Odin had bounded the alternate reality prison was such that possibly not even the mighty Thor could have entered it by direct inter reality travel. However at the time of it's creation Odin had included a "key" to the alternate reality. A circuitous path through other alternate realities that led to a "back door" entry. Of course Odin had created it initially for his own use.

Levitating across the chasm between them the Dark Odin, or even Anti-Odin if such it could be called, moved toward Thor. About half way across it raised its right hand and energies swirled about the hand that were darker even than anything else in this reality. A random discharge of white lightning struck the swirling dark energies and was absorbed by them.

Then the dark mystical energy stream was directed across the remainder of the chasm at the mighty Thor. Thor absorbed the dark energies in his great hammer mjolnir and

then hurled them back at the Anti-Odin amplified many fold and transformed into lighter energies.

The returned energies struck the Dark Odin on his wrist and dissipated immediately. They seemed to trouble him not at all. He then raised his right arm again and with the most casual gesture the entire monstrous mountain that Thor stood atop was transformed into a moving fluid mass of small rock, debris and dust. The Dark Odin directed it to smother the mighty Thor as billions of tons of it fell upon him. But what is that to one who controls the real Odinfence?

With his vast matter manipulation capabilities Thor remained levitated in exactly the same position and simply returned the fluid mountain to its original non fluid form.

Thor then twirled mighty mjolnir at indescribable speed but saw that he could not by this method generate the heat here that might be possible in other realities. Instead he allowed the lightning and Asgardian energies to gather about the hammer then threw it at near instantaneous speed directly at his adversaries face.

Dark Odin was unmoved. It grabbed the head of mjolnir in one huge hand, then, clasping it by the handle in its other hand, triumphantly raised it high. By some means it had discerned the importance of the hammer to Thor, the bond twixt the two.

It did not matter to Thor that he was now a skyfather level being. Odin had had his mace and his spear gungir, so Thor had mighty mjolnir – some things do not change.

The alternate Odin had no time gloat because the son of the real Odin was upon him seeking to wrest the hammer from his grasp. Distracted the two great beings fell the thousands of feet to the chasm floor below. There the battle continued in a more purely physical way. Such was its intensity though that the entire mountainous topography about them began to collapse. Mountain ranges buckled, colossal earthquakes began, and valleys rose up from the floor.

In a sense the battle had only just begun in earnest, as the two entities had only been testing each other out, merely prodding and probing, so far.

Thor wondered if this entity had any way of knowing that he was the son of the creator of this entire reality. Since the being made no attempt to communicate with him Thor could not be sure. He had unsuccessfully attempted to mentally probe the creature and was sure he had not been probed by it.

As Thor and the alternate Odin struggled so to did the dark and white lightning. Though originally directed by their masters the Lightnings took on a separate life of their own. They seemed to duel throughout the length and breadth of this reality. Gradually though this reality grew ever darker a sign that the dark lightning was beginning to prevail.

Thor knew that he was not merely facing some sort of evolutionary accident that had simply taken his fathers likeness. No - somehow trace elements of the Odinfence had been retained in this reality after its creation. The elements had been too small and became too dissipated to form a coherent single force and went undiscovered for some time. Eventually though forces aborning in this reality discovered the trace elements and succeeded in synthesizing the Odinfence. The ultimate result of that action was a parallel dark Odinfence wielded by the Dark Odin.

As the battle between Thor and the alternate reality Odin grew in intensity it threatened to unbalance that reality and to break the imprisoning barriers created by Odin himself so long ago.

Thor saw also that other significant powers in this reality were working on the barriers. Applying dark energies against perceived weaknesses and at the same time following aspects of the mighty Thors energy trail as a possible indicator of a back door entry to other realities. Among these others were what had to be a dark cold-heat version of Surtur carrying not a sword but a monstrous axe.

Also a black ice version of Ymir, colder by far, Thor could sense, than even the Asgardian elemental. There were others too such gross caricatures of certain Asgardian entities as to be all but unrecognizable.

Seizing the moment, Thor hurled the Dark Odin many kilometres through a super dense buckling mountain range. Though the creature teleported back almost within the instant the son of the real Odin had just time to prepare a skyfather level godblast – with a difference.

As the mighty Thor allowed his god essence to become one with the hammer supreme he also allowed those energies to burst forth purely in the form of the most brilliant light. That light filled up this entire reality and surely was an act that bore comparison with the original creation of Thor's own reality.

With the barriers surrounding this reality about to give way it was the best attack Thor could think of to give immediate pause to all within this reality. Yet, with all. it was not enough.

The brightness of Thors godblast released only as intense light/heat energy was, in physical luminosity, beyond anything heretofore experienced in any reality. Here in this darkest and coldest of all the realities its effect was staggering.

There was no place in this reality to escape the intense brightness and many of this realities scurrying demon like minions perished under a bombardment of light and heat anathema to them and entirely outside their experience.

Though it briefly halted the attempts to breach Odin's imprisoning barriers on this reality, Thors controlled godblast did no permanent damage to its great powers.

Amid the mountainous topography still buckling and heaving from their earlier battle the Dark Odin moved again toward Thor. Unlike the creator of its reality, that it was modelled on, it carried no obviously overt weapons or channelling conduits such as a sword, mace, or spear.

Except that is for some form of highly energized and grotesquely shaped mystical pounders on its fists.

Thor sensed something behind him. Moving faster than the speed of thought he moved just in time to avoid the swing of the Dark Surtur's monstrous axe. The entity was even larger than the Asgardian elemental upon which it was modelled. The fires also burned within it but they were cold fires, combustion taking place at temperatures high for this reality but too low to support combustion for even mystical fires in many other realities.

Not yet seeing the need to alter his own size Lord Thor struck the Dark Surtur's axe hand with such reverberating power that the monstrosity released its grip on the axe crying out in presumably a guttural expression of pain. Indeed this was the first utterance of any kind Thor had heard from any of the non communicative great powers of this reality.

The Dark Odin watched on with an ugly smile on its face. It seemed content to see how the Dark Surtur fared against the intruder. Thor felt that compared to the original majestic template, Dark Odin was little more than a primordial brute. Dark Surtur motioned slightly and the axe rose up from the depths below returning toward him much as mjolnir would to Thor. Of a vicious sharpness it seemed to be sheathed in an energy envelope that could both protect and enhance it but could also disappear when merely metallic ultra sharpness was required.

Thor hurled mjolnir at the huge axe smashing it sideways and driving it into Dark Odin's massive fortress which had already sunk somewhat as the sheer cliff under it had buckled with the earlier fighting. While mjolnir's return to its masters hand was near instantaneous Dark Surtur's axe was less responsive, only slowly returning to its master.

Motioning Surtur to stay back the anti-Odin lunged at Thor fists flailing. Thor stepped aside smashing the behemoth in the back with a two fisted blow that drove it deep into the

ground. Dark Odin reached out for Thors leg like lightning but Thor was even faster moving clear of the titan.

Getting to his feet there was a look in the alternate Odin's eyes that reminded Thor of a certain green mortal behemoth that had once walked the Earth. Though the power and strength involved here was of an entirely different order of magnitude still it served as a reminder that getting into a purely physical slugfest with the Dark Odin might not be the best approach tactically. Particularly with Dark Surtur, Dark Ymir and what now appeared to be some alternate Mangog abomination all nearby.

Thor saw that sheer power alone was probably not going to win the day. Not for the first time since arriving Thor wondered if he should have asked Lord Zeus and one or two other skyfathers to accompany him.

The extreme light and heat that Thor had created with the god blast was inevitably dissipating. Without the generation of still more light and heat it seemed to be slowly absorbed into the darkness of this reality. Thor saw also that the seemingly random black lightning discharges continued anew interrupted only briefly by his godblast.

As his mind raced Thor realized that he could not now simply leave this reality to its own devices. Thanks in part to his own appearance here its denizens were on the brink of breaching the barriers that kept them in them in this reality. Even if he left as he had come via the inter reality back door Dark Odin at least would be able to follow him - with all that entailed.

"Surely Odin would have built in some kind of fail safe for this reality?" mused Thor "a plug that could be pulled if the barriers bounding this reality were ever breached?"

As Dark Odin kept up the pressure the alternate Surtur and Mangog joined the fray. As alternate Odin's fist pounders went off the scale in an energy surge he struck Thor a mighty blow on the side of his ace and at that exact same

instant Dark Mangog struck a bone shattering blow and Dark Surtur struck with his powerful tail.

Thor struck the ground harder than he could ever remember. As he attempted to rise Allfather Odin himself offered his hand. Surtur, Ymir, Mangog and others trembled in the background. "Arise my son" boomed the Allfather and we shall deal with these miscreants in short order."

Thor wondered if the Dark Odin had simply created an illusion in his mind or whether his enemies had resorted to Shapeshifting and were merely acting out their parts. No matter as the Allfather offered his hand Thor rose striking him with the blow to end all blows. The Allfather reeled under the seldom used "Thorblow" and as Thor looked down so he again saw the Dark Odin before him. Thor saw also that this was neither Shapeshifting nor illusion but rather a mild attempt at reality manipulation. For all the brute that Dark Odin appeared to be Thor realized he must not be underestimated.

Thor needed to buy a few moments of time for his next move. He did so by employing another skyfather level godblast. This time though it was the normal energies that one associates with the godblast but in pulsating bursts at each of his adversaries. Even the Dark Odin grunted and gave ground before the onslaught.

Thor then twirled his hammer about him at indescribable speed and began the short trip back in time to the commencement of this reality. There to prevent the evolution of life in this reality ever before it began.

Thors intent was clear to Dark Odin and Thor did not quite reach his intended destination before the dark god, dark elementals, and Dark Mangog intercepted him and again engaged him in battle. The black-ice Ymir grabbed Thor in his monstrous hand and Thor suddenly knew a level of cold heretofore beyond his experience. For a moment Thors mind reeled and he looked like succumbing to a coldness that made the theoretical absolute zero seem like a blazing sun.

As his mind reeled Thor looked back at the seemingly unreachable another few hundred years back in time where he thought he actually saw Odin in the process of creating this reality.

Thor called out “Father” willing his voice to travel backward in time “aide me.”

If Allfather Odin heard his son or witnessed the events taking place in his near future he gave no sign of it. Instead he continued with his mighty act of creation.

Thor finally escaped the alternate Ymir’s grasp shattering the dark elementals black ice hand into a million shards.

Dark Odin and the others had no desire to remain in this time and literally dragged Thor back up though time to the now moment where the struggle continued.

A look of grim resolve appeared on Thors face. There could be no holding back now, he would have to literally defeat every single denizen of this reality before he could return to his own. If necessary he was prepared to induce a controlled warrior’s madness in himself to achieve this objective.

Dark Odin prepared a massive energy onslaught as did the other alternates but instead of directing it at the mighty Thor they struck at the very barriers that had held them so long in this reality.

The already weakened barriers started to crumble and glimpses of the myriad alternate realities beyond could be seen beyond the failing barriers. But then this whole reality started to alter, to decrease in size, to draw in on itself in an act of implosion.

As elements of this reality there was nothing that Dark Odin and his allies could do to escape the implosion. Thor not being a native of his reality twirled mjolnir about himself creating a barrier that protected him against the implosion. Safe within his own protected field Thor watched the entire act of implosion from start to finish until, along with the total collapse of Odin’s imprisoning barriers, there was nothing. Absolutely nothing at all.

During his act of creation back at the start of this reality had great Odin seen or heard the mighty Thor's struggle with the All Fathers dark counterpart? Or had the fail-safe implosion mechanism always been in place for just that eventuality if Odin's barriers were breached? Thor was pretty sure he knew the answer.

End

Enter Galactus

Our Universe

Deep Space

Some time in the future

The normally powerful frame of the great Galactus was gaunt and almost totally consumed by hunger. A craving deeper and more ravenous than anything he could recall. His armour was scorched dark, heavily pitted and scarred and there were raking marks running across his chest plate. Around him lay the sworling remains of his once mighty Worldship.

The world devourer's recent defeat of the unholy alliance of former creation Tyrant, and former heralds Morg and Terrax had taken its toll on him. The trio had chosen their time well, attacking Galactus when his energies were already at a low ebb. The titan needed to feed and very soon.

Heraldless for a very long time now the world devourer used what seemed to be his very last reserves to teleport from the void between two distant galaxies to the nearest star system. It was beyond his current capabilities to re-form his Worldship nor was anything of worth salvageable amidst the destruction.

At the very edge of the star system he teleported to the devourer was confronted by a memory from the distant past. Drifting seemingly helplessly towards him an armoured form that had once served him uncomplainingly as a herald. The Asgardian Destroyer construct at human size level.

Such an entity would not trouble a fed Galactus but in his current weakened state he approached it carefully. Galactus detected that the Destroyer was empowered by the life force of a single Asgardian. A life force that gave all the appearances of having been driven to total insanity.

The life force of a single Asgardian god was hardly even a morsel to one such as Galactus. Still the devourer gladly consumed that morsel. Galactus sensed within the Destroyer construct some small residual energies of its skyfather creators and he consumed that too. With it a very

small element of that which was once known as the Odinpower. The Destroyer mechanism now nothing more than an inert mass of fairly durable metal continued to drift aimlessly outwards from the star system.

Galactus looked on to into the star system ahead of him and was again surprised by what he saw. This is not to say that the great one is easily surprised. To the contrary for an entity that is in fact older than the Universe itself there are very few surprises in life.

Asgard and all the other worlds of Asgardian cosmology, save Earth itself, had either impacted or were orbiting various planets and moons of this large star system. Asgard itself being in a clearly decaying orbit about the system's very largest planet.

The worlds of Niffleheim and Muspelheim had both appeared to meet ignominious fates. The former crashing into this systems large sun and the latter impacting a giant ice world. Only the barest, almost imperceptible, traces of these cataclysmic events still existed but for one such as Galactus it was more than enough. Of the elemental forces that might have prevented these events, that is to say, Surtur and Ymir, Galactus sensed nothing.

"It was" thought Galactus "as if a giant hand had scooped up all of the nine worlds, other than the Earth, taken them to this place then thrown them randomly at the star system."

Odin himself was presumed long since dead and the worlds of Asgardian cosmology had gone missing and unheard of now for several centuries. "More to the point" mused Galactus "unthought of for centuries." The great one pondered on this. Not only had the Asgardian worlds been removed from the Asgardian plane of existence but no one had really given the matter any thought. The destroyer of worlds saw that he would need to be careful in this place. Particularly in his present still parlous condition.

Galactus saw in an orbit between the two outermost of the star system's worlds, a sword of monstrous proportions. Light from the distant sun reflected from the sword's blade. It was he realized the ancient sword of Surtur, long time bane of the Norse gods. Galactus moved closer probing the sword. It contained recognizable residual energies of its creator but these were blended with other much more alien energies. Galactus sensed an innate hostility in the sword. Whether it was just to him or to any that might approach it he could not say. Though he still badly sought nourishment Galactus left the sword Twilight untouched and moved deeper into the star system.

Galactus saw a second sword of similar proportions to the first. It lay in the middle of an asteroid belt. The Colossus saw that it could only be the sword of legend, the fabled Odinsword itself. Fully the equal, if not more, of the sword Twilight.

The Titan pondered for a moment on the two great swords. Neither seemed damaged in any way despite the otherwise massive destruction evident in this system. As if, somehow, the two mighty swords lay waiting to be used in final battle by two great powers yet to show themselves.

Galactus approached the Odinsword. Unlike Twilight it did not seem to be inimical to his presence. Also, unlike Twilight, the greatest sword ever known had not been corrupted by alien energies. Galactus first thoughts were to drain the great sword of whatever energies were necessary to restore himself to full strength. Instead he picked it up hefting it in his hands. It was large even for Galactus but not impossibly so. Had it somehow accommodated itself to his size? Even without his urging the great sword bathed the world devourer in some of its energies further restoring him.

Galactus placed the great sword upon his back. It was not bound to him by any physical straps but rather by a far stronger stasis link. The sword hummed gently, as if, in present circumstances at least, the great Galactus was a

rightful and worthy wielder. The Leviathan resolved that if a worthy Asgardian appeared, such as the mighty Thor, or even great Odin, he would gladly hand the sword to them. Galactus moved closer to Asgard. It was decaying and filthy beyond all description and would soon fall from its low orbit to the monstrous world below. At first it appeared uninhabited but then he sensed the presence of scurrying life forms in its cellars and other underground areas. And there was something else.

As he watched on the great Galactus sensed an incoming interdimensional teleportation. Almost before he had time to react a very sharp scythe like weapon struck against his personal force fields and disintegrated. Before him stood an entity that Galactus recognized – Perrikus of the Dark Gods. The god always very solidly built had gone to fat and streaks of grey ran through his hair. In short he had aged somewhat – perhaps like those of Asgard the narcissistic dark gods were not true immortals?

With a mere gesture of his hand Galactus restrained Perrikus forcing the gods arms by his side and then forcibly levitating the dark god such that Perrikus eyes were at the same level as his own. The world devourer then telepathically entered the dark god's mind where he found only partial answers to his most immediate questions. Desaak, slayer of gods, had come more by happenstance upon the weakened Asgard that had impacted upon this star system. The nemesis of all gods had wrought his destruction and long since left. The Dark Gods leaches and savages that they were moved in only when Desaak had finished. Eventually even the Dark Gods had tired of Asgard and left it to whatever fate had decreed for it.

Galactus saw in Perrikus's mind that the oafish buffoon before him was now de facto leader of the dark gods having murdered his own mother – Cellestion Zheillia – a fact that should surprise no one. "They will have to find another leader" thought a still hungry Galactus, as he consumed

Perrikus, thinking at the same time that this was no great loss at all.

The leviathan then moved even closer to Asgard. The collective life forces of the semi-intelligent entities that scurried about in the bowels of Asgard scattered would have been far less than a single god of Asgard. Still Galactus consumed them all at the same time cleansing the city of them. Still there was something else.

As Galactus sought to investigate there was yet another interdimensional intrusion. A mightily wielded ebony sword struck against his personal force fields energies cascading everywhere. The sword's wielder, vaguely human shaped and as ebony dark as the sword itself, was larger than Galactus. As it moved to strike again he saw it for what it was, the union of all the dark gods, save Perrikus and Cellestion Zheillia, into a single entity. As the all dark god entity struck again Galactus stopped the huge sword with one hand sending the power cosmic up through the sword and into the entity. As the great Galactus continued the power cosmic surge, the all dark god entity fell apart into its individual component entities. Some attacked Galactus individually while others scurried to perceived safety. No matter, Galactus consumed every last one of them and, finally, the great hunger within him was assuaged.

In entering the ruins of Asgard Galactus came across one final inhabitant – the “something else” that had troubled him. The Asgardian warrior goddess the Lady Sif, imprisoned within a most formidable barrier and left to die by the dark gods. Only by scraps provided by the scurrying semi-intelligent final inheritors of Asgard and her indomitable spirit had she managed to survive. A distance from Sif's prison lay her sword and a small bag of Norn stones.

Galactus mused for a moment. Here lay the chosen woman, the chosen goddess, of the god king Thor of Asgard a power at the very least equal to himself. Yet the mighty son of Odin and all others of Asgard were nowhere in evidence and his

lady was in a most parlous state. Did this mean that Thor the mighty, the most powerful of all the pantheon gods of the Multiverse was now dead?

Desaak and the Dark Gods may have wrought great harm here but only after another greater power had first left its imprint.

It had been a very long time since the great Galactus had enjoyed the companionship of a herald and it occurred to him that an Asgardian warrior goddess might make a very good herald. He noted that by human or even godly standards she was considered most attractive. Even though not truly immortal time and hardships had only aged her slightly. If anything she could be described as even more beautiful. Of course the great Galactus is above such matters – is he not?

Thus Sif was released and restored to her former good health on the understanding that she would serve, for a time, as the new herald of Galactus. An undertaking which, given her present circumstances, she was only too pleased to make. Galactus then bestowed upon her the gift of the power cosmic. As part of the same understanding it was agreed that Sif would be given some latitude to seek out whatever might be left of the gods of Asgard. Where possible Galactus would assist her in those endeavours. Galactus realized that with time Sif's pride would reassert itself as would her somewhat feisty nature. However as an Asgardian goddess she also had a strong sense of honour and duty. In reading Perrikus's mind and in looking back into the time stream the great Galactus sensed that the mighty Thor and some other survivors of Asgard still lived – somewhere.

Before Galactus and the Lady Sif (Galactus had decided to use the "honorific") departed the great Galactus restored Asgard to a stable orbit and if not to its former glory at least to a more reasonable condition.

For who was to know if one day, some of the great city's original owners might return to reclaim it?

Invested with the power cosmic the Lady Sif was imposing. As the new herald of Galactus she seemed even more the Asgardian warrior goddess. A little taller, her frame a little more athletic, her body even more alluring to man or god. There was also something penetrating in her eyes that had not been there before.

Of course the aesthetic tastes of men or even of gods meant nothing to Galactus.

The Norn stones from Sif's bag were embedded in her forearms, three in each and were almost a part of her. They would provide additional capabilities to the power cosmic. Sif's sword, known for its interdimensional teleportation capabilities, became virtually a part of her, almost as the Silver Surfers board was a part of him. The sword of Sif had also acquired other properties.

Sif was unable to relate much of the events that had led to Asgard's demise. She did recall that the Thunder God was in the Thor Sleep prior to the attack. From his gentle probing of Sif's mind, Galactus saw also that the Odinson had been removed from Asgard while still in the Thor Sleep and prior to the attack on the City. Whoever, or whatever, had done this had left no residual energy trail

After leaving the star system containing Asgard, Galactus returned to the vicinity of his destroyed Worldship. Using his ability to manipulate matter and energy the great one created a starship from the still sworling debris. Not perhaps as large as his former Worldship but an impressive construct nonetheless. Something he would build on over time.

As he and Sif readied to depart in the new starship a part of Galactus was not inclined to investigate the fate of the Asgardians, at least not immediately. He had other concerns. Certainly the plaintive requests of his new, untried and untested herald were not enough to move him. Yet other more subtle urgings seemed to impinge upon him.

Galactus looked at the OdinSword. Not for the first or last time he pondered on the wisdom of taking on temporary custodianship of it. Still he could not have left such a powerful weapon untended. He sensed also that, while it was with him, the great sword would never allow him to become ravenous from hunger.

Elsewhere (and perhaps) elsewhere the mighty Thunder God drifted even deeper into the Thor Sleep. It was a fitful sleep full of images of the destruction of much of the nine worlds. Some part of Thor's mind sensed that he had slept far too long. Another part sensed that at least some of the images in his dreams might be real. He struggled to gain wakefulness.

On their return to the star system containing Asgard Galactus carried out a full survey of the system. He detected life including god essences on several of the system worlds and allowed the lady Sif to investigate. Homing in on the location of the god essences she discovered to her immense delight several rag tag bands of surviving Asgardians and even a few giants, trolls and dwarves. Among them, praise be, Balder, the warriors three, and her brother Heimdall. With them was the great ship of Odin. Though resembling a much larger version of a Viking longboat, Odin had mystically made it capable of sustaining and transporting the gods through interstellar space. Sif towed the damaged Odin Ship and her fellow Asgardians back to an Asgard that, thanks Galactus, was now in stable orbit and at least partially restored.

Of the survivors of Asgard it was the steel tough mind of Hogun the Grim that seemed the last affected by the tumultuous events. Without the grim one's knowledge Galactus carefully probed his mind. Amidst the images of death and destruction and of being hurled through space there were images of a single Celestial and also of a dark and relatively ancient arcane force. Exactly what part, if any, these had played in Asgard's fate was unclear. Hogun's

mind did not recognize the Celestial though Galactus assuredly did. The great one pondered how this particular Celestial could even have been in this place at that time. Even so the Celestial and the dark forces somehow colluding with it ought not to have been able to inflict the destruction that was wrought here. It was one thing to transport 8 of the 9 worlds of Asgardian cosmology and thrust them at this star system. It was another thing to do so in the face of the opposition of elementals such as Surtur and Ymir, of the magics of the Loki, Karnilla, the Enchantress and other Asgardian sorcerers, of the Destroyer construct and all else the Asgardian plane could bring to bear. Not least among that the power source of the OdinSword and presumably the sword Twilight. "No" thought Galactus "these entities though immensely powerful in their own right had other help." It was at this very moment that Desaak god-slayer emerged again near Asgard. Whether he had returned to gloat over the carcass of Asgard or had sensed residual god essences to be absorbed in a further drunken orgy was impossible to say. Suffice that the presence of the imposing form of the cosmic entity known as Galactus was not something he had expected to see.

The confrontation between Galactus and Desaak was short lived. The axe of Desaak thrown at mind numbing speed and coruscating with brutal energies was crushed to fine metallic dust in the huge vice like grip of Galactus.

As energies thrust forth from the eyes and hands of Galactus lashing all about Desaak the slayer of so many pantheon gods found no god essence or god power to absorb. While for a time the brutal entity moved closer to Galactus he began to wilt visibly under the torrent of cosmic energies engulfing him.

As he had done with Perrikus, Galactus forced Desaak's arms immobile then levitated the god slayer so that his eyes were level with those of the world devourer. The great Galactus then brutally probed the mind of Desaak. In it he

saw some of the answers to what had happened here although the slayer of gods resisted fiercely. Eventually Desaak's mind crumbled completely under the assault, and before Galactus could obtain all the answers he desired. With his now useless mind completely broken Desaak, slayer of pantheon gods, was himself slain by a perhaps a different type of god.

Elsewhere the son of Odin struggled mightily to regain consciousness. Those who had taken him while he slept the Thor Sleep had buried him in every sense of the word. Deep below mountainous terrain in a remote world of an even more remote dimension. Surrounding Thor's sleeping casket was a large time stasis field intended to hold him within the Thor Sleep literally until times end. Also around him were other barriers that would require either Thor from within or rescuers from without to bend reality. Thors great hammer mjolnir lay by his side within the sleep casket.

Those who placed Thor here had intended that he suffer for an eternity as he was kept not only in a permanent state of sleep but by some unknown means fed images of Asgard's destruction and continuing humiliation As he approached wakefulness Thor was reminded of another who tossed and turned restlessly underground sleeping the endless sleep and he wondered.

As he struggled to wakefulness Thor began to assume a degree of control over his dreams much as some ordinary mortals can. The resultant psychic reverberations and emanations fuelled by the growing realization and anger at what had been done to him resonated across galaxies and across dimensions. The emanations were easily detectable by the machineries aboard the new starship of Galactus and indeed by the OdinSword itself.

By the time that Thor finally burst into full wakefulness Galactus, wielding the OdinSword, had teleported to the dimension and world of Thors entombment and stood astride the mountainous terrain above.

As Galactus struck from above and Thor from below the mountain was vaporized, the time stasis field destroyed and the imposed reality barriers were warped and bent aside. With the son of Odin now awake and free the great Galactus, almost ceremoniously, proffered the OdinSword to him. Thor, hammer in hand, mystically increased his size to Galactus level but motioned to Galactus to retain the sword at least for the nonce.

Thor cried out in anger, a sound that seemed to reverberate across the galaxies and across the dimensions, which only for the barest moment, separated him from his tormentors. Wherever those loathsome entities now were it was a cry that found them out and that must surely have chilled them to the very core of their being.

They sought to entomb Lord Thor within the Thor Sleep for all eternity. Forcing him to dream almost endlessly of the rape and degradation of Asgard. With their plans now on the brink of failure, there was only one recourse open to them. The final revenge of obliterating Asgard at the very moment the mighty Thor was escaping his tomb.

In these barest of moments before the great Galactus and the mighty Thor could arrive the new starship of Galactus moved, seemingly unbidden, closer to Asgard enveloping it in a most formidable force shield.

The new herald of Galactus, the Lady Sif, had not accompanied the devourer and remained within his starship. She could have remained there in some relative safety but this is not the Asgardian way. Emerging from the starship Sif launched herself at Asgard's tormentors manoeuvring among the heavens with a speed and agility that would have made even the Silver Surfer proud. At the same time she launched bolts of the power cosmic which contained also a mystical sting courtesy of the Norn stones now almost part of her.

To the dreaming Celestial and the dread Dormammu, Sif would hardly have rated even as a minor annoyance. Two

withering bolts of celestial energy just missed Sif before a third struck her a glancing, yet surely deadly blow sending her plummeting in the massive gravitational pull of the huge world below. She would land at much greater speed and with much greater force than had she been falling in Earth's modest gravitational pull. In almost cowardly fashion Dormammu struck the goddess with a bolt of intense mystical energies as she fell.

Though all this took no more than scant seconds the time delay, achieved by Sif, was more precious than an eternity. As the Dreaming Celestial and his sorcerous henchman struck at Asgard the multi-layered protective force shields of Galactus starship, enveloping Asgard, held but just barely. At that precise moment the mighty Thor and the great Galactus appeared and Sif's terminal velocity fall was slowed not a moment too soon. Not by Thor but by Galactus.

Perhaps Thor should have seen and acted on Lady Sif's plight before Galactus but he seemed pre-occupied with those now confronting him

In all his long years as a warrior god and later as Asgard's liege lord, Thor had never felt more powerful and never more angry. Though the Thor Sleep was troubled, still it had restored him to the very peak of his great power. He struggled though to contain his anger that threatened to develop into full uncontrolled warriors madness. If this happened all would be lost. Instead he sought to hold the madness at a controlled level.

The reason for the Dreaming Celestial's hatred for Thor was well known. At an earlier time when the Celestial broke free from his underground sleeping imprisonment and those of his own ilk seemed reluctant to act, all of Earth turned against it. It was the mighty Thor that ultimately led the way to again imprison the Dreamer at the very same spot of his earlier imprisonment. This was done with the aid of sorcerers and mystic beings from the Earth and Asgardian

planes of existence and from other places. Among them fellow skyfathers, Dr Strange, Karnilla, Agomotto and even Loki.

It is said that the enigmatic Celestials are beyond such human traits as anger, humiliation, and the need for revenge. But who really knows this? Further the Dreaming Celestial is not representative of his star spanning race of space gods. As to Dormammu, does the dread one, he who once challenged even mighty Eternity, ever need a reason for his equal hatred of all things good and noble in the Multiverse? Never could it be said that his interests were anything other than diametrically opposed to those of Asgard. In truth it was Dormammu utilizing a spell as ancient as time itself that succeeded in releasing the Celestial from his imprisonment by Thor and in aiding it in the havoc wrought upon eight of the nine worlds. An action taken while the mighty Thor was in no position to oppose them.

Sensing that this battle was primarily one between Thor and the Dreaming Celestial the great Galactus passed the sword of Odin to his companion.

Placing his hammer in the custody of Galactus, Thor grew mystically to Celestial proportions and without prompting the OdinSword returned to its normal immense size. The hammer of Thor is one of the greatest weapons that ever was and shall forever be. Yet, if there be a mightier weapon still, surely then it is this great sword this great and noble instrument for good. The OdinSword.

The Dreaming Celestial raised its huge palm and the sword of Surtur instantly appeared within it. The sword seemed to fit surprisingly well. It had been left in the star system for possible future use. Imbued not only with the energies of its creator, but arcane energies from Dormammu and previously unknown and rarely used Celestial energies from a source still resident in the Celestial home dimension. It was this source, now long disclaimed by the Celestial race

that had aided Dormammu and the Dreaming Celestial in their devastation of the worlds of Asgardian cosmology. Teleporting the short distance to Dormammu and moving with reflexes that belied his great size Galactus grasped the dread one in the unbreakable grip of his good right hand. Even though Galactus strength was near limitless it was far, far more than merely a physical grip. Dormammu writhed and struggled calling on arcane forces and it was plain to see that given time he would escape the grip of Galactus. No matter the great one could hold him long enough for issues to be decided. One way or the other.

Thor was surprised by the Celestials choice of weapon, indeed that the miscreant even felt the need for any type of weapon. With energies flashing across his entire now massive frame and along the entire length and breadth of the greatest sword ever made Thor thrust at the Celestial. The Dreamer seemed to belie its name parrying with surprising dexterity with Twilight. Or perhaps the sword, so fundamentally altered within, no longer really ought to bear that name.

As the struggle intensified the mighty Thor seemed to grow ever stronger, ever more powerful and more and more became as one with the OdinSword. The Celestial moved to the defensive as every now and then the OdinSword would remove an arm or a leg. Briefly Celestial essence would spew out only for the limb or other part to be quickly regenerated. Thor became frustrated with this wondering how much damage needed to be done to overcome the Celestial regeneration capacity. Eventually the two adversaries came to a simple test of strength as their swords locked together. It was at this point where the OdinSword and that which was once the Sword of Surtur seemed to engage in their own private battle, a battle within a battle.

In the simple test of strength the son of Odin was not found wanting (has he really ever been except in contrived

circumstances?) and he thrust the Dreaming Celestial backwards a considerable distance. In the process the sword that was once Twilight shattered into tiny shards and slivers of metal and other things. The enchantment that could hold it together against the OdinSword simply does not exist. At a slight distance the Dreamer directed bolts of Celestial energy from its eyes (if eyes they be) and from its hands. Four separate bolts at Thor. Thor deflected these with the OdinSword and then thrust the great sword into the abdomen of the Dreaming Celestial. Holding fast Thor raised the sword. Momentarily Thor was reminded of a stuffed pig or other roast on a spit at an Asgardian banquet. Were it not for the circumstances most dire he might have laughed. The Celestial seemingly unhurt grabbed the Odinsword on either side of him with a force that threatened to break it. Thor pulled the sword out and with a both mighty and masterly stroke cut the Celestial in half and half again. Stopping in fascination the Thunder God watched the space god trying to rejoin and regenerate. He saw the entity was at the limits of its ability to do so and with two mighty strokes he carved it still further. Celestial life essence spewed and dissipated everywhere, beyond that single entities ability to reform itself.

In the battle between the Multiverse's most powerful god and the mad representative of the Celestials there was bound to be collateral damage. First and foremost among this was the massive world about which Asgard lay in orbit. It was completely obliterated. Asgard, still protected by the layered force shields of the starship of Galactus, remained secure though now in an orbit of its own about the system's star. The lady Sif, whatever her condition, had been teleported from the massive planet to Galactus starship and was being tended by robotic devices.

Dormammu for his part had had enough. Finally escaping from Galactus vice like grip, he fled interdimensionally to a place not immediately obvious but not his own dimension.

At this moment a Celestial Host numbering 12 appeared. Though enigmatic and impassive in the extreme Galactus sensed considerable gravity in their demeanour. Without their intervention one among their number was on the verge of ceasing to exist. By some means unknown they gathered in all the life essence of the Dreaming Celestial but did not recreate the form in which he had appeared to non Celestials or at all. Instead they appeared to share the life essence among themselves.

Thor, exultant in victory, almost glowing with power, and completely as one with the OdinSword stood ready to confront the Celestials. Galactus also grown to Celestial size stood shoulder to shoulder with him.

No words, nor telepathic thoughts, came from the assembled Celestial behemoths. Still, before their departure, a few simple gestures made it plain, particularly to Galactus, that the matter was at an end.

Thor and Galactus both now returned to their usual size tended to Sif aboard Galactus starship.. She was in truth close to death and in her herald form it required a rare combination of the power cosmic and the ThorPower to heal her.

After a short period of convalescence the Lady Sif, true to her word, and perhaps to the surprise of the mighty Thor, joined the great Galactus as his Herald. The debt of gratitude owed by Asgard to Galactus was of such proportions that she felt this was the very least she could do. It was a long time before the Lady Sif returned to Asgard and her service to the great Galactus is stuff of legend.

Though in time neither saw it as service as such. A relationship of a different nature to any he had ever experienced with earlier heralds.

The dread Dormammu was never seen from or heard from again. Though some noted that Thor made a short interdimensional journey not long after the departure of Sif and Galactus.

Though he rebuilt Asgard beyond the earlier restorations of Galactus, the mighty Thor kept the eternal city for a time in the star system to which it had been thrust. He discovered riches in some of the worlds of the system beyond expectation and placed Asgard in high orbit about one such world. Yet other survivors of Asgard were discovered among the system worlds and moons over time as were mortal beings of human likeness. In time the population of Asgard increased to pre-catastrophe proportions and more. The star system proved to be close to the denser core of the galaxy it lay within and received many visitors including other non Earth pantheon gods. Almost all of them welcome. Instead of a pocket dimension of its own, Asgard settled for a vibrant star system in our own Universe. Muspelheim and Niffleheim both casualties of the Dreaming Celestial were never recreated though Hel survived after a fashion. Almost immediately Thor created a permanent dimensional link with Earth and with Olympus. While regular contact was maintained it seemed to diminish over time as other interests developed. Thor continued to visit his mother Gaea from time to time. If Thor missed his former lady, Sif of Asgard, now Sif of the Universe he never said.

End

Triumph of Evil

The Great Hall Asgard 2210 AD

Of all those present in the great hall of Thor, only the Lord of Asgard and the Silver Surfer sensed the imminent danger.

Scant milli-seconds before its arrival, the duo combined to create a protective force field against the maelstrom. A force field that melded as one the power cosmic and the Thorpower.

Only those physically closest to Thor and the Surfer at that moment now lay within the field's protective embrace. Heracles Lord of Olympus and Iron Man.

It was not the Iron Man that you would know, Tony Stark being long since dead. You could even be excused for not recognising the highly advanced ultra light armour encasing his descendant.

Outside all was destruction for as far out as any and all of the four could sense. This was something far more than just the localised destruction of Asgard. Nor was it merely some type of annihilation wave passing on its way. No, Thor knew, deep in his soul, what was happening here was happening everywhere and at the same time.

As the destructive forces raged outside, tongues of unknown and unknowable energies penetrated the Thor/Surfer protective shield. Even though it was now reinforced by the son of Zeus. The energies lancing at the occupants within, curious to know what sort of entities could possibly have

survived the unsurvivable.

As they did, Iron Man erected his own energy shield to protect the foursome. A shield within a shield. The inquisitive tongues of energy retreated temporarily. Something within the composition of the inner shield troubling them.

Seeing that even this might not be enough Thor and Heracles together created a pocket dimension. From within the buffers of the pocket dimension and their own combined energy shields the four rode out the universal destruction.

When the four titans re-emerged in what should have been our Universe they were inside a protective force bubble that was powered by them all. A most formidable combination of Asgardian and Olympian energies with the power cosmic and advanced 23rd century earth science.

What they emerged too was nothing, a total void with no evidence of existence. Not a star, or planetary or lesser mass was visible or detectable. Even the loneliness of deep space is usually punctuated by the light of some very distant stars. Here there was nothing. The Silver Surfers superb vision detecting not so much as one candlepower's worth of incoming light.

Within the relative safety of the near impenetrable force bubble the four traversed our Universe in large teleportation jumps looking for any signs of existence. Nothing was evident. Nor, without any supporting frame of reference, could they be certain that they had actually moved any distance at all.

At a break in their teleportation jumps, Heracles carried out an experiment. Placing his much vaunted mace just outside

the protection of the force bubble. Only to see it immediately cease to exist.

Still within the protective force bubble the four began teleporting interdimensionally. Here too they were confronted only by non existence. There was no evidence that any of the Multiverse's myriad of different dimensions still existed. Though without any frame of reference none of the four, could be certain that they had teleported interdimensionally at all. At best they were simply teleporting interdimensionally from nowhere to nowhere.

At that moment all four within the force bubble had the same thought at the same time. That they, and they alone, might be all that remained of existence. "There must be others that survived" said the Surfer, "in the same way we have." His companions remained grimly silent. Not for the first time since the current train of events had commenced Thor and Heracles pondered on their supposed godhood status. Had they only been playing at being gods? and now were the real gods, those responsible for recent events, about to show who was really in charge?

The four speculated upon who or what could have been responsible for such an act. An act of a crazed Celestial with the infinity gauntlet or perhaps of the Living Tribunal himself? Yet what had happened here was on such a scale, of such magnitude, that it transcended even those possibilities. Bringing them back each time to only one possibility. One name and one name only came to them all.

Of the four the Silver Surfer, even more of a loner now than in our time, seemed the least affected and Iron Man the most. Far more so than his companions the former herald of Galactus was used to the loneliness of deep space. Which would equip him well now. By comparison the great great

grandson of Tony Stark was only too well aware that underneath all the brilliant technology, he was a mortal man in a uniquely hostile environment.

Anthony Stark desperately hoped there would be no failures in either the power source or other technologies of his suit. Though he must have known that any one of his three companions could and would provide him with alternative power. Not for the first time, the latest iron man pondered on whether scientific and technological advances could ever one day make men the equal of the gods, or the cosmic powers. Perhaps not. Still there were capabilities in this 23rd century armour that even the mighty Thor didn't know about. Human ingenuity is a formidable thing. Not least among that ingenuity was armour that could sustain him near indefinitely even in deep space.

Confronted with no signs of existence in the present, the four chose to travel into the past in search of answers. As they moved downtime, in what should have been our own Universe, the events of the past receded away from them. The very history of the Universe evaporating before them. Like the print of a two dimensional newspaper being removed to leave only the barren tabloid. Until, when they reached the time before time, there was no history left to recede away.

Travelling from our present into the future yielded the same result. Future events, future history evaporated before them leaving only blankness, until, at the end of time itself, there were no future events left to evaporate.

The only option now remaining was to explore the alternate future timelines. It seemed as if each timeline, each alternate future reality would yield the same emptiness. Yet finally in the far, far flung future of a single alternate

timeline they encountered something other than emptiness. A whole Universe of existence. A squalid, foreboding and ugly place, full of the stench of evil that might have been created from the worst nightmares of man, god, or cosmic entity.

At this moment the Watcher appeared. Uuaatu levitated at a distance from the foursome. The normally impassive entity looked shaken by recent events that had been far greater than any he had heretofore observed.

“How did you survive?” enquired the Surfer “when almost no one else has?”

“I am the last of my race” said Uuaatu “I was spared only so that I might do that which I do – observe and bear witness to momentous events.”

Though it was clear that Uuaatu knew more he said nothing else.

At that moment the single timeline, a single shard of existence, began spreading backward in time. Forging a history and a past where there had been none. Solemnly the Watcher looked on at the bizarre act of creation. He continued to watch long after Thor, the Surfer, Heracles and Iron Man had departed.

‘There is only one option open to us’ said Thor. The others agreed.

“We must seek him out” said Heracles.

“Your father met with him once?” said the Surfer.

“Aye” replied Thor.

“How was that done Thor?” asked Iron Man.

“In the only way in which one may approach him” responded the Surfer “unless he comes to you.”

Later (if time meant anything at all now) the four stood at the edge of the monstrous multi-dimensional black hole. The only known gateway to he whom they now sought. It had not been here when they came this way before.

It stood in a Universe of nothingness with nothing to be attracted to its awesome gravitational pull, save the four brave souls now near it. If for that reason alone, it seemed to pull at them with even greater attraction than any laws of physics might have suggested.

“We should all go” said Thor “Heracles and I for the gods, the Surfer for the cosmic powers and Iron Man for all of humanity.”

The Surfer had been going to ask Iron Man how his suit might withstand the gravitational pressures but thought better of it. The former herald of Galactus had been gone a long time but he knew, well enough, that human technology had not stood still and that human ingenuity had not diminished.

Thor, Heracles, and Iron Man had all wondered how the Surfer was faring. With no external sources of the power cosmic available to him. They need not have. In the intervening years he who was once Norrin Radd had changed. He had had drifted well away from men and at the same time had become even more powerful. Something had happened over those years which was not common knowledge. None of the three cared to ask and the Surfer did not volunteer any information. Suffice it to say that there was no one else they would sooner have with them in this unimaginably dire situation.

Then the four allowed themselves to fall into the great gravitational well. Lingered for just a moment in the

inconceivable density of its core before allowing themselves to be drawn beyond. To the other side of the multi-dimensional black hole where they entered the totally infinite and totally timeless eternal ethereal sea. That which surrounds all Multiverse's' past and future and is the preserve of only one entity.

From there they teleported across a vastness that made our own Universe seem little more than a mill pond.

All were only too conscious that here in this place they could only rely on their own internal reserves of power. There existed no external well or reservoir of energy that they could draw upon. Nor could there be any assistance from any source.

The four reached their destination.

"Skyfathers, Surfer, Iron Man, I have been expecting you" came the less than friendly greeting.

He who is above us all took different forms depending on the viewer. For Thor he appeared as an even more majestic version of Odin seated on an impossibly large throne, for Heracles substitute great Zeus for Odin, for the Surfer substitute the one time authority figure of Galactus and part of the control room of his Worldship. For Iron Man, his estranged father. Authority figures all, but there was nothing comforting in their presence. Nor was that the intent.

Yet all four saw the same entities in attendance with The One Above All. A sight to freeze the veins or chill the bone marrow for any entity that had veins or bone marrow. An assemblage of evil that included Tyrant creation of Galactus, Thanos of Titan, the dread Dormammu, Loki god of mischief, the death gods Hela and Pluto, and Perrikus of the dark gods

to name just a few.

Somehow, somewhere along the way, the forces of evil had managed to gain the ear of the ultimate power in existence or even in non existence.

Certainly this explained a great deal, virtually all that had happened.

At that moment the Living Tribunal appeared. Did those visages look low and dispirited thought the Surfer though with the Tribunal it was impossible to tell. "Welcome my friend" said TOAA "we have missed you" in condescending tones which suggested that the Tribunal was anything but welcome and had not been missed at all.

"How could we ever have allowed this to happen?" Thor heard himself say as energies dripping with evil began crashing all around he and his companions.

The massive energy fusillade crashed against the force bubble coruscating across its entire surface and threatening to collapse it.

He who is above us all looked on with some amusement but did not intervene. The Living Tribunal watched on, more than merely uncomfortable.

The four heroes in the force bubble returned fire concentrating on the weaker elements of an alliance of evil that had somehow gained the ear of TOAA.

Perrikus of the Dark Gods, Loki and the dark lord Pluto fell before the onslaught only to be immediately revived by TOAA. That is if they were truly who they appeared to be in the first place.

With the energy assault on the force bubble continuing, the bubble suddenly ceased to exist exposing the four heroes momentarily to the full brunt of the assault and forcing them to hastily erect their own individual force shields. This was no mere failure of the force bubble under the assault but direct intervention by omnipotence.

“Gentlemen, gentlemen” came the smoothest imaginable telepathic communication entering every entities mind in an all pervasive manner “is this the way to entertain our guests?” With not even a gesture the combatants were thrust aside and appearing before them was what appeared to be an Earth 19th century English croquet lawn, complete with tables of tea and crumpets. The setting was even adorned by a few more than bemused local gentlemen and women.

Appearances were not deceiving. This was not merely a visual image or recreation down to the minutest detail; rather TOAA had reached back before his act of Multiversal destruction and placed this small segment of space time before them. In short, it was the real thing.

“Please, partake of refreshment, catch up with old friends” continued the insistent, almost compelling telepathic message.

Iron man was horror struck; utterly dismayed to see the crystallisation of his growing belief that absolute power was now totally mad.

The Surfer looked across at Thanos. He could sense the mad Titan scheming as to how to get the best out of the situation. As if, somehow, Thanos might even be able to get the better of the greatest power in existence.

Though none of the four heroes yet knew it, it was Thanos himself that had been the catalyst for events. Thanos who had become aware of the significance of the multi-dimensional black hole and had been the first of the evil alliance to make entreaties to TOAA.

As no one among the combatants came forward to take up the offer of refreshments from TOAA the mighty Thor stepped forward. "Lord, why do you do this?" he asked addressing TOAA directly. "Surely you remember my fathers visit?" There was no fear in the voice of the son of Odin.

TOAA seemed to pause and reflect, not unfavourably, on Allfather Odin's visit. Yet the moment of omnipotent reflection passed.

"Do not persist Son of Odin, your resistance to authority is known, yet you stand now before omnipotence!" said TOAA, both speaking the words and telepathing them at the same time.

Yet Thor did persist. For when have you ever known him to bend the knee against perceived injustice?

"Lord of Asgard, yield up your hammer" came the booming telepathic response causing some minds present to crumple.

Almost all of these entities of evil now present had felt the power of the hammer of Thor at some time or other. All of them, especially Thor's step brother, stood transfixed as TOAA held out his hand.

Every ounce of the enchantment within the hammer and every fibre of strength within Thor's body resisted the request. Yet TOAA was insistent, gradually increasing the

unlimited force and power that lay behind his request.

The veins in Thors face and arms looked set to burst, his muscles bulged unnaturally large, his hammer seemed on the verge of breaking apart. He was now holding it with both hands.

It should have been over, long before.

Finally, inevitably, Thor's grip weakened and the hammer flew into the waiting grasp of TOAA. He who is above us all looked around accusingly at the Living Tribunal and also at the Silver Surfer. They had quietly conspired to assist the mighty Thor.

TOAA looked at the Surfer knowingly, yet his omnipotent anger was reserved solely for his greatest creation. With merely a stare from his master the Tribunal's limbs began to move uncontrollably and his head rotated on his neck at considerable speed. The Living Tribunal assumed a grotesque posture eventually lying prone and unmoving.

It was a truly frightening demonstration of ultimate power both humbling and hideously grotesque at the same time. That the second greatest power ever to have existed could be treated in such a matter.

"Take your hammer back Thunderer" telepathed TOAA almost respectfully "If you want it that badly."

The moment was alleviated when all eyes turned to an unexpected visitor, Uuaatu the Watcher.

"Watcher why have you left your assigned post" came the angry telepathic boom.

Defiantly the Watcher chose to ignore omnipotence addressing instead the now recovering Living Tribunal and the four heroes.

“The single future timeline is spreading back into the past and splintering into alternate realities, each even more misshapen than the original timeline.”

Uuaatu continued and was somehow allowed to continue “TOAA purged the entire Multiverse, save those of us now present, and is replacing it with a madness gleaned from the deepest recesses of the minds of evil now present.

It was then that Thor perceived how it was. Those representatives of evil now present, whatever their original intentions, were just as much hostages to the whims and mood swings of TOAA as the heroes, the Watcher, and, as just amply demonstrated, even the Living Tribunal.

The Watcher’s mouth continued to open yet no further sound came forth. His mind continued to send telepathic utterances yet none present received them. His body began to implode

“I have no further use for him” said TOAA “his is a race that I have never really cared for, watching on as curious observers while others struggle for their very existence.”

“You may return to your contestation” said TOAA “let the amusement continue.”

With that the small bit of space time that had been a 19th century English croquet lawn returned to oblivion and the battle between the heroes and the evil alliance recommenced.

In the free flowing battle that ensued Thanos of Titan was nothing but contemptuous as he and Loki struggled with the

Thunder God. As if he knew, with certainty, that no matter how many times Thor might defeat him, TOAA would always resurrect him it.

Though everyone fought their own fight the sheer savagery of the struggle between the Surfer and Tyrant and Morg turned heads.

Heracles pondered on this. He and Thor both knew that something involving Tyrant and Galactus and some of the heralds of Galactus had happened decades ago and deep in interstellar space. Though none of those involved ever spoke of it again. The son of Zeus would have been hard pressed to think of two entities more savage than Tyrant or Morg. Yet did he sense fear in their eyes now?

The Silver Surfer was fighting as none of the other heroes had seen him fight before. More powerful, savage, brutal, unyielding. Heracles thought of an ancient legend – of stories still occasionally heard in Olympus – of a great cosmic warrior.

The mighty Thor stood above a fallen Thanos the last dregs of a massive Skyfather level godblast still issuing from his hammer. All that was left of Thanos chest cavity was a smoking ruin – yet it had provided some hitherto unknown information about his anatomy.

As always the Titan had proved enormously durable even more so than in times past, forcing Asgard's Lord to use one of his greatest weapons.

Thanos' craggy face was only partially destroyed. What was left of it lay with a smile, looking in the general direction of TOAA. This was definitely not a clone.

It could almost have been a scene out of the Roman Coliseum. With Thor watching TOAA as a gladiator would have watched Caesar. Yet TOAA did not choose to resurrect the Titan.

Thor for his part was holding the god blast in check. If TOAA resurrected Thanos the unfettered godblast would be unleashed again. A direct challenge to ultimate authority.

Some may think that this was exactly what Thanos desired. To be with his love Mistress Death. Yet TOAA had removed everything from the past Multiverse, even death, leaving a state of total non existence. A null Multiverse where death no more existed than life. True a new Multiverse was being formed by TOAA but it was embryonic – a single far future timeline starting to splinter into alternates and moving back to the past – death had yet to gain a foothold here.

Elsewhere on the battlefield Tyrant had met with the same fate as Thanos. Tyrant knew the reason for the Silver Surfer's new level of power and it had unnerved him yet the creation of Galactus fought to the last. A badly injured Morg appeared to be appealing to TOAA but that absolute being decided not to resurrect Tyrant either.

Whatever deal the alliance of evil thought it might have struck with TOAA appeared to be null and void. Yet, given the actions of TOAA, it seemed as evil had triumphed anyway.

"So hard to get good help these days" said TOAA "I shall just have to do this myself."

TOAA thrust aside the Olympian Lord and Dormammu at a crucial stage of their encounter and looked at Iron Man. The Avenger had fought magnificently. His new technologies

surprising Pluto and Perrikus neither of whom had encountered the armour in long years. It brooked the question again of what mankind might ultimately have been capable, if they had only been given time.

In the brief lull the Silver Surfer pondered on the state of mind of TOAA. The absolute being had washed his hands of the Multiverse and retreated to total isolation. Eventually taking no further interest in his handiwork. Since only the truly great powers of the former Multiverse could visit via the multi-dimensional black hole gateway those visits tended to be sparse. In fact non existent until All Father Odin came millennia ago to avert a major crisis of that time . The combination of inconceivable isolation and the more recent contact with the deepest recesses of the foul minds of the alliance of evil was enough to unbalance even the greatest mind of all.

TOAA stripped Iron Man's ultra light armour from him, disintegrating it without regard for the frail human body that lay within. Anthony Stark was left burned, bleeding and almost unconscious from the pain.

As Thor, the Silver Surfer and Heracles raced to Iron Mans aid they were barred by a barrier of unknown composition. Suffice it to say that the multi-layered, multi-faceted barrier was far, far more than just a powerful energy shield. To TOAA this appeared no more than an amusement. A test, if you will, for the remaining three heroes.

As the two Skyfathers and the Silver Surfer struck at the barrier all three felt the exhilarating additional power and capabilities coursing through them. The Living Tribunal had not chosen to intervene directly. To do so would have been to invite something worse than what had befallen him before. For some reason the indirect approach of using the

already enormously powerful heroes as proxies did not invite immediate retaliation from TOAA. Perhaps absolute power was just playing the game.

None of those present save TOAA and the Tribunal, can know how the Multiverse guardian had felt at his earlier humiliation at the hands of TOAA. Yet no one need doubt the lengths to which that truly awesome entity will go to set matters aright. When the creator of our Multiverse effectively left us, it was the Living Tribunal that he left in charge. The ultimate arbiter. The ultimate responsibility.

As the three heroes still struggled to reach Iron Man to the seeming amusement of TOAA, the Living Tribunal looked on at the still forming new Multiverse. It's rate of creation, including the expansion of the grotesque original timeline back into the past had slowed dramatically.

It posited the question: does even omnipotence have its limits? Such as trying to create a Multiverse while toying with the Living Tribunal, the former Multiverse's two most powerful pantheon gods and the Silver Surfer, wielder now of a power that even TOAA had not entirely understood.

Ultimately the mighty Thor, the Silver Surfer, and Heracles bent reality to recover their fallen comrade and passed him into the comparative safekeeping of the Living Tribunal.

The Surfer looked at Thor and Heracles and they looked at him. Now backed unreservedly by the full power of the Living Tribunal and witness to a newly forming abomination of a Multiverse the trio had no choice.

Sensing that TOAA would probably just wink them out of existence the trio launched themselves at omnipotence.

And found themselves falling into the abyss that was now the mind of he who is above us all.

Since before time began no entity had ever been in this most sacrosanct place of all. The mind of TOAA.

Thor, Heracles and the Silver Surfer marvelled at what they saw. Though all three were now great powers in their own right, there was nothing that could truly have prepared them for this.

The reason for their spirit essences having been drawn into this most inviolate of places could have been anything from a continuation of the game being played by the seemingly mad TOAA to a cry for help from that ultimate authority. The three did not come under any immediate attack, yet palpable evil existed here, in this innermost sanctum, the one place where it should never be. The Silver Surfer sensed a precarious balance twixt that evil and all else here. The clear cause of TOAA's instability. The Surfer saw also that until this inner conflict was resolved TOAA might be something less than omnipotent.

The Surfer detected that evil had evolved in this most unlikely of all places. Possibly a product of untold millennia of chosen isolation. The external alliance of evil did no more than perhaps stimulate it a little in the entreaties they made to TOAA.

About the three great beings existed the knowledge of all things. All events that had ever taken place or might ever have taken place in the former Multiverse. All unfolding events in the embryonic Multiverse still aborning.

Then in the uneasy co-existence, the evil that had established itself here struck out again - its goal - total domination of the mind of TOAA . It was a battle that the

two Skyfathers and the great cosmic being known as the Silver Surfer could not avoid, even if they wanted to. There was simply nowhere else for them to go.

For what could have been the merest moment or, just as easily, all of eternity the great battle raged.

For the Surfer and the two Skyfathers it was not a battle that involved planet shattering blows of hammer or mace or energy exchanges across star systems. Rather it was fought at a metaphysical level.

Whatever element of goodness within TOAA had drawn forth the conscious spirit essences or souls of the three great powers it had been seeking their help. By comparison the evil here sought to overwhelm the intruding spirit essences. The chosen form of attack to remove from them every ounce of courage, honour and nobility they possessed. Thor and Heracles had visited upon them all those past events which had tested them to their utmost limits. All at the same time. On top of this the untimely deaths of their fathers Odin and, more recently, Zeus were visited upon them again.

The Surfer was subjected to equally distressing and testing events including repeated alternate dream fantasies of the death of Shalla-Bal and indeed all of Zenn-La. An attempt to, crudely put, "break him."

At times Thor, Heracles and the Surfer found their individual consciousness co-mingling and were able to give support to one another. It was during this co-mingling that the two great skyfathers gleaned the truth of relatively recent events concerning he who was once the mortal Norrin Radd.

The Power of the Silver Surfer revealed

A mere few decades before the destruction of our Multiverse the Surfer had by choice become largely planet bound.

Living in harmony on a world harbouring the final few survivors of the greatest race of sentient beings that ever strode the stars. The mighty Brell. Many millions of years ago Brell star fleets moved across space time, dimensions and realities and policed them as easily as we might walk to the next street. Even in decline, a single Brell soldier on an out posted world could smash an invading star fleet. This was at a time when TOAA had long since retired from events and when the Living Tribunal seldom needed to adjudicate. The mighty Brell were an active force for stability and order like no race before or since.

Through one of those most impossible twists of fate a disputation between the great Galactus on one hand and Tyrant, Morg, and Terrax on the other had spilled over into the star system that the Surfer had begun to call home. The beautiful world that had become a sanctuary for the Surfer was nothing more than collateral damage in the conflict.

The Surfer's appeals for reason were ignored.

At his then power level the Surfer, to his undeserved shame, was unable to prevent the destruction of that world and its inhabitants. The ageing and much diminished Brell could have saved themselves but instead chose this as their time to depart the living. In their final act passing on to the Silver Surfer all of the residual knowledge and power of their once great race. To the one being in all of eternity they felt it could be entrusted.

At first Norrin did not entirely realize the knowledge and power that was now his. Though he was honoured by the final act of the Brell.

Thor and Heracles saw that even now the Surfer was still cautious with this power. Reluctant to draw on it for anything more than was necessary.

The attempt to “break” the souls of the Surfer and the two Skyfathers was a fundamental mistake of the first order. A clear demonstration that the purely evil components within the mind of TOAA were not of themselves omniscient. A mistake that TOAA in his normal state would never have attempted. Doubtless given a sufficient aggregation of power even the Silver Surfer in his present form could be physically defeated and his conscious mind destroyed. What could never be done would be to take from him the nobility of his soul while still leaving a soul of sorts. No more than one could remove the courage of Thor or the honour of Heracles.

Though the inner resolve of all three, in their own different ways, was tested to the utmost limits of their capacity, they all held firm. At the moment of realization that this form of attack could never succeed, the evil within the mind of TOAA ejected the conscious spirit essences of the three titans and returned them to their physical bodies.

To the waiting and now recovered Iron Man and the remaining members of the evil alliance there had been subjectively no apparent lapse of time . All stood dumbfounded looking on at TOAA. That entity stood before them completely immobile having appeared to have shut down. The Silver Surfer, Thor and Heracles all knew that the inner battle taking place within the mind of TOAA was still unresolved. Whether they had made any difference to TOAA’s internal conflict, only that ultimate authority knew. Though, mayhap, the Surfer had an inkling.

The Living Tribunal was not with Iron Man. Even before the armoured one signalled the fact, the Surfer realized that that the Tribunal was attempting to stop the spread of the fledgling Multiverse. A Multiverse based on the conceptions of the evil now existing in the mind of TOAA and plumbing, at least in part, the wildest depths of depravity, the wildest dreams and aspirations of the minds of the evil alliance.

Elsewhere, what had started out as a far distant future, single shard of reality. A seed almost casually sown by TOAA had now spread deep into the past and splintered into a myriad of alternate time lines. Now even with the intervention of TOAA temporarily withdrawn that embryonic Multiverse was evolving of itself. Each splintering alternate time line more thoroughly grotesque, more chillingly bizarre than what came before it.

Thanos and Tyrant had still not been recreated. Still Thor, Heracles the Surfer, and Iron Man were still confronted by an evil alliance that boasted the likes of Dormammu, Mangog, Annihilus, Mephisto, Hela, Pluto, Perrikus, and Loki to name just a few.

As Thor and Heracles prepared to engage their foemen, an uncharacteristically impatient Silver Surfer thrust these miscreants aside with just a gesture consigning them to the same oblivion as TOAA had earlier consigned our former Multiverse. Knowing now the nature of the Silver Surfers power neither Thor nor Heracles was surprised by this demonstration, though Iron Man looked on disbelief.

With that the four heroes teleported from the chosen home of TOAA, in the truly limitless ethereal sea, to join the Living Tribunal in his great task. Behind them TOAA remained immobile, locked in a form of his own choosing, all his attention now turned to his own inner conflict.

The heroes arrived at a nexus point between newly emerging realities. There the Living Tribunal himself seemed hard pressed.

This entire embryonic but rapidly emerging Multiverse was throwing everything it could at him. The Surfer knew the Living Tribunal had been empowered by TOAA as the ultimate adjudicator in our old now obliterated Multiverse. He had not been vested with adjudication powers for this abomination of a Multiverse now aborning.

Instead of facing the likes of Thanos, Tyrant, Mephisto, Mangog, Dormammu and many others the heroes found

themselves confronting in physical and physical/energy form the very worst nightmares created from the deepest recesses of those evil entities minds. Entities spawned by an act of TOAA. Something ultimately far worse.

Thor, Heracles, and even the Living Tribunal looked over at the Surfer.

Atop his great board the silver skinned power house moved across to the Living Tribunal hovering a little above the Tribunal's visage. Mighty energies flowed between them in both directions. The two titanic entities launching a sustained assault against the nearby nexus point.

By their side Thor, Heracles and Iron Man, joined the assault on the nexus point after first fending off an attack from creatures they would never have encountered even in their worst nightmares.

At first nothing seemed to happen at the nexus point but then the grotesque alternate realities slowly began collapsing in on one another which was certainly no bad thing. At the same time the slowly converging realities began unravelling from the past leaving a state of non existence behind.

All present could see where this was going to end. Just as all present could see that it was time for a different act of creation.

"Perhaps I can help with that" came a smooth telepathic communication and physical voice that seemed to gently permeate everything. He who is above us all had finally resolved his inner conflict to the benefit of the untold trillions of living beings that were just a few moments from creation.

TOAA allowed the Living Tribunal, the Silver Surfer, Thor and Heracles to participate in the great act. Iron Man watched on in total wonder.

TOAA did not recreate our Multiverse exactly as it had been, though he could have done so. There were a number of quite noticeable absentees and not a few new faces among

the greater and more influential powers of the new Multiverse.

After it was all over, God decided to hang around for a while. He left the Tribunal in the same adjudicator role but the Almighty decided to keep a closer eye on things than he had been doing. Call it therapy for his previously self imposed isolation.

Thor and Heracles became the representatives for all of the new Multiverse's pantheon gods.

The Silver Surfer?

He became a kind of very high level, highly efficient cosmic policeman carrying out something of the role that the mighty Brell had carried out in our old Multiverse.

Of course he still found time to soar among the stars and just on the odd, and highly unlikely chance that he did come across something he couldn't handle?

Well in God and the Living Tribunal he had some pretty persuasive friends.

End

Orin

Earth, Some years in the future

"Are you all right?" gasped Jenny, her small daughter Kim at her side, as the imposing man approached her homestead "do you need any help?" Through his badly ripped, metal studded, shirt she could see a deep savage cut across his chest.

He had come in from the forest. Even in his current state; injured, dirty, clothes ripped, and white hair and beard unkempt, there was a certain majesty about him.

His face looks old, she thought, but he doesn't have the body of an old man.

The man, who thought his name might be Orin, responded openly to Jenny's questioning eyes. "I cannot tell you what I am, or where I am from, I have no memory of past events."

Jenny took him inside. "You are not from here" observed Orin as Jenny tended to him "although your daughter is."

"You are observant, especially with your memory loss" replied Jenny "I am one of the survivors of the Drealth star ship explosion of twenty years ago" "When the ship broke in two and fell on greater Los Angeles" she added quietly.

This meant nothing to Orin though at the time it was seen as a modern equivalent of the old Hindenburg disaster, on a much larger scale

Jenny did not mention straightaway that those survivors, the last of her race, had received no help or sympathy from Earth's various authorities. Rather they had been treated as outcasts, and small in number, they had gravitated to various isolated locations. Leading the simple life, keeping away from authority, and not drawing attention to themselves.

Jenny and Orin talked deep into that first night. Orin, his mind a blank slate, eagerly soaked up information. About Earth and about other worlds Jenny had known. Jenny answered freely and at the same time her alien intelligence gently probed for anything that might help loosen up parts of Orin's memory. There would be other such nights for them.

The next day and at the expense of two pairs each of blunted scissors and razors Jenny trimmed Orin's hair and shaved off his beard. Those who had known him of old, including his son, would have been surprised.

Orin stayed on with Jenny and Kim and was good about the farm. Not with things mechanical, but building and repairing sheds and fences, digging trenches, planting, and in the care of the farm animals. While he stayed with them the weather was more than favorable and none of the farm animals or indeed anything or anyone much hereabouts died. It was as if, in his presence, Mother Nature and even death itself had stayed their hands.

"You seem happy here with us Orin" said Jenny after his first week "I wonder if you were happy where you came from?" Orin did not reply. Vague and jumbled recollections had started to come to him; recollections of power, of the burden of responsibility for many, of a frequent struggle for existence and of battles almost without end.

Here things were simpler: a life of physical activity, of good food and good company. Not just Jenny. Others of the survivors of her alien race had visited them. The mysterious Orin was popular with them all. Some advanced theories as to his origins but all were far from the mark. Also Orin found the company of little Kim half alien, half human most pleasurable. She seemed to combine the very best of both her dead fathers and her mother's races. Her curiosity was

insatiable and in his efforts to answer her myriad questions he felt small elements of his memory trickling back.

In his spare time Orin had his interests. He had restored a small smithies forge on the farm and there were some residual mining ores still about, the remnants of a mining past. Orin spent many hours here making a variety of artifacts. Implements for the farm, ornaments for the homestead, and other things.

Even more pleasurable than this was caring for the farms stallion named Churchill. When Orin had first come the proud animal had been close to death but he and Jenny, both in their different ways, had nursed it back to health. It was a magnificent beast, an English Shire Stallion of sufficient proportions that it could accommodate even Orin's huge frame. It reminded him of a similar animal that was once his. Riding it was a source of great joy for him.

All the while Orin had been slowly re-learning some of his capabilities, rediscovering his powers, physical and otherwise.

Early one morning Orin had been riding Churchill. Jenny came out unexpectedly to watch them and they were nowhere to be seen. Then looking into the gradually lightening sky, she beheld the impressive sight of Orin riding Churchill over a thousand feet above the ground and at impressive speed. As if they were the advance guard heralding the coming of the dawn.

Later Orin dismounted from the great beast, clearly exhilarated. Jenny smiled "you're not keeping something from me are you Orin?" she asked "Something I should know?"

"When enough of my memory returns to make sense of things, you will be the first to know Jenny" replied Orin.

A few days later Jenny and Kim looked in on Orin, in the smithies forge. One artifact caught Jenny's attention. It was

a short handled hammer with rather a large head. The handle was wrapped in leather and a small leather thong was attached to the base of the handle. Jenny had seen the hammer somewhere before. Possibly in ancient drawings.

Some weeks later, after a beautiful day, Orin, Jenny and Kim partook of the evening meal out in the fields. It was mid summer and so the sky was still very light. Then Orin became disturbed. Jenny had not seen him like this.

Moments afterwards Kim cried out and an early summers evening turned into night, though it was darker than any night Jenny had ever known. Even on other worlds she had been to. For a few seconds a chill went through her. Then Orin raised his hand just slightly but unmistakably and the darkness was gone.

“Orin” enquired Kim very softly “are you God?” It was a thought that had occurred to her mother on more than one occasion. Though Jenny never dared ask.

“No” responded Orin with one of his rare smiles. He was very definite on this matter and yet did not choose to elaborate.

“Does this mean your memory is returning Orin?” enquired Jenny.

“Still only fragments, but more all the time” responded Orin. Days passed without further incident and things seemed to return to normal.

Jenny found out that the incident referred to as “the darkening” had happened everywhere on Earth at the same time. Even where it was already night it became darker still. Earth’s scientists were at a loss to explain it.

Meanwhile the deep cut in Orin’s chest showed no visible signs of healing. Yet it did not fester. It was as if it were a permanently fresh wound. It was intractable to conventional earth medicine, Jenny’s alien treatments and even what

seemed to be Orin's otherwise self healing capabilities. Looking into the cut Jenny saw a depth in it that scared her. She knew it was only Orin himself that had prevented it getting worse.

Several weeks later a darkness came again. Across all of the Earth and more. A different type of darkness. Not purely a matter of the absence of light. It was also a darkness of the mind and of the soul. Orin did not stop it.

"I sense it is an old enemy" said Orin "An unbalanced, yet once fundamental force, of the Universe."

Orin continued "Though now I must meet it on different terms." "With only fragmentary recollections of who I am, and only a partial sense of my capabilities."

And with that deep wound still very much upon you thought Jenny

Orin left Jenny but returned in only moments. Wearing some of the ornamentation he had forged in his spare time. Jenny gasped. Orin, her Orin, as she now liked to think of him, was resplendent in burnished heavy full battle armor that matched his huge frame. If he had retained some element of majesty when first they met, now he looked absolutely magnificent. Somewhere inside Jenny felt deep pride. She realized that he looked like a Viking Warrior of Earth's ancient times. Or maybe one of their supposedly mythological gods. Though from her readings of Earth history the distinction between what was real and what was mythological was blurred.

In the total darkness Jenny and Kim and everyone else on Earth could see nothing. But they all felt the presence, all about them, clinging to every pore of their bodies. Were it not for Orin, Jenny might have succumbed to a fear beyond her considerable experience.

From a source that was neither the sun nor other stars, but seemed to come from within Orin himself, a light that was

more than just physical light, a light that was the enemy of all darkness, including the darkness of the soul, flowed forth.

With the coming of the light, Jenny's enhanced vision saw the mass of alien energies high above them. Girdling the Earth and preparing to constrict it.

Then close by them, Jenny noticed a woman or at least a woman form. Tall and attractive in a slightly faded way, she seemed to come out of the very Earth itself. As if she had been formed from its basic elements. Orin knew her to be something from his past and yet the memory would not quite come.

He sensed, more than knew, that the planetary resources were now behind him and able to be called at his bidding. The true planetary resources that is, and not the still feeble technology of man.

As Orin prepared for battle, Jenny grasped his arm and pointed to the homestead. "All the survivors of my race, some of whom you have met, are now with us Orin." "They have all come here at my request."

Orin had known that Jenny and her kind held alien powers. That they almost never used them so as not to draw attention to themselves. Yet he couldn't resist the temptation. "You haven't been holding out on me have you Jenny?" he smiled.

"No more, perhaps, than you have with me." was her reply. "We have powers that we have always kept from the Earth authorities" Jenny continued "They may be insignificant compared to your own mighty Orin, but we will help if we can."

Orin looked across to the homestead one last time and saw that children of various ages were among the group. Some were of Drealth parentage, yet others, like little Kim, were the result of mixed breeding, human and Drealth. He

realized at that moment where the true power of the group lay.

Still high above the globe girdling alien energies continued their slow constricting earthward descent. Some of them coalescing into a huge physical form.

The Drealth adults saw something they had hoped never to see again, not in any of their long lifetimes, and every last one of the adults was chilled to the marrow of their alien bones. The children, all born on Earth, did not know, they had never been told.

Orin sped skyward on his magnificent steed, Churchill, one hand on the stallion's reins and the other holding the great hammer he had forged.

The gigantic physical entity, still high above, seemed not even to notice.

Below the woman form that had emerged from the rocks and soil of the Earth moved toward Jenny and the other watching alien Drealth, drawing them, especially the children, into her protective embrace.

Raising high the hammer he had created, Orin summoned a series of storms. He had known for weeks now that he had the power to both summon and stop a storm. Since the night when little Kim had cried out in fear at the height of the first storm since his arrival and Orin had stopped it with just a wave of his hand.

Starting as pockets in different parts of the world these storm cells linked up in moments to form a planet wide super storm. Extending to the limits of the Earths' atmosphere and even beyond. To where a merely earthly storm ought not to be able to go. There the storm, which was more than a storm, engaged the equally globe girdling alien energies.

Orin astride his steed Churchill appeared to be enjoying the storm. Watching on as the elements of his own creation engaged the alien energies about the entirety of the Earth's circumference. He was fascinated at the resultant swirling, writhing, planet wide confrontation.

With only partial awareness of his actions Orin, had added a cosmic element to the storm and other things. He sensed also that the women from within the earth (whom he now thought of as the Earth Mother) was also fuelling the storm.

"Odin of Asgard, you yet live" came the taunt from that part of the energies which had taken physical form.

At these words, Orin or Odin's memory return was as complete as it was instant. "As do you do Dark One" came his reply.

Jenny below gasped. Orin, her Orin, was a semi-mythological entity. The leader and Allfather of an entire race of gods.

The full enormity of earlier events flowed into great Odin's mind. The battle at the All Place, where all the different realities converge. A struggle that had involved, in one way or another, all of the great powers of existence. Nor had it be clear cut. At times the dark side of a single great entity warring against its own lighter side. Beings torn apart from within by the turmoil.

Only two entities had survived, a wounded Odin, bereft of memory and Fate, or more correctly only the dark aspect of Fate.

Dark Fate's actions were merely a continuation of the earlier battle. A desire to reach a conclusion. No matter that neither remaining adversary had yet fully regained their strength.

As the two titans came to physical contact Dark Fate thrust its fist coruscating with unknowable energies directly into Odin's deep chest wound. Staggering though the pain was,

it was not totally beyond the experience held in the muscles, tissues, arteries, and veins of Odin's great body.

Pain notwithstanding Odin held his own, slowly and by sheer physical strength alone, pulling the behemoth's hand out of the wound.

During his ordeal mighty Odin had sensed his mind caressed slightly to just take the merest edge off the indescribable pain. The caressing touch was expertly guided by the Earth Mother but it was unmistakably the hand of the Drealth children, especially the half breeds and especially Kim. Though it may not have affected the result, he was grateful for it.

With ever increasing energies spreading along the impressive length and breadth of the physical forms of both titans the earth mother saw, what she had already known, that this was a conflict that her world was not likely to survive.

Then Gaea spoke again "Yours was one of the worlds it destroyed child, I am sorry." With the use of that single word Gaea welcomed Jenny upon Earth in a way that no one else had done in the 20 years she and her fellow drealth had lived here.

The Earth itself seemed to groan under the physical strain of the confrontation. In the immediate area of their struggle the Earth's crust threatened to collapse under them. Seeing the danger Gae allowed the collapse as suddenly the two titans were buried under millions upon millions of tons of rock and earth. Gaea reforming Earth's crust above them as the near omnipotent combatants sunk into the molten magma of the Earths mantle.

Still the Allfather held firm though his strength and courage were tested to their limits. Down here, in these depths, the minor comfort that the Drealth children had been able to provide was not forthcoming.

Then Odin became aware , as the molten magma roiled about them, that his adversary, was beginning to absorb the energies of the Earth from within the mantle.

Odin saw that the Earth Mother had joined them here. Acting together skyfather and elder goddess channeled the physical form of Dark Fate out from the mantle, through the Earth's crust and beyond the Earths atmosphere.

Temporarily suspending its exponential absorption of the Earths resources.

Here Odin's almighty storm had stalemated the alien energies of the Dark Fate.

With his hammer in both hands Odin engaged his adversary with a power, speed, strength, and battle skill that would have made even his mighty son proud.

His son the Asgardian god of thunder Thor, whose great hammer mjolnir, was the template for Odin's more recent creation. The new hammer may not have been the equal of the original, as indeed no weapon is, but it was, still, a creation of the Allfather and as such worthy of respect even by Dark Fate.

Almighty Odin struck his adversary time and again until the hammer construct began to break into pieces.

Yet at some point during the conflict beyond Earth's atmosphere the mental assault of Gaea and the Drealth ensued. Dark Fate was ready for it, or so he thought. The form of attack should have meant nothing to him. Indeed the adult Drealth assault was even less than that. Yet as mighty Odin had surmised, even before regaining his memory, the true power of the Drealth lay with the children. Most especially the half breeds such as little Kim.

As Allfather Odin fought the good fight the voices of the children rang loud in the mind of Dark Fate. Not just the Drealth but all the children that ever perished and ever would at the hand of Dark Fate.

Deep inside the recesses of what passed for the mind of Dark Fate there must have been just the merest kernel of residual goodness to respond to the children's cry. That single kernel was enough.

End

The Return

For thousands of years the great hammer lay in the vast Australian outback just a few kilometres from the monolithic Ayers Rock. If time and the elements had scoured and pitted the hammer, it was not evident. Nor had the drifting sands covered it as might have been expected.

While various stories about the hammer existed, the most persistent was that it was the fabled hammer of Thor of Asgard, the long absent, and assumed dead, Norse God of Thunder. According to mythology the weapon was the greatest ever known to god or man.

No one had ever taken the trouble to measure the weapon, if such it was, but the shaft was hundreds of feet long.

Rumour had it that the mighty Thor had been of mortal dimensions, albeit tall and powerfully built. But he was a God and a God can assume any size he chooses can he not ?

In the early days the tourists came here and the hammer became a greater attraction than Ularuu itself. Children climbed scaffolding to play on the shaft of the hammer and on its huge head. But the tourists came less and less and over thousands of years the great hammer silently bore witness to the decline of man. The alien incursions took their toll upon the Earth. Earth's myriad superheroes fought valiantly, their numbers diminishing greatly with each intrusion. The alien forays humbled the military forces of the Earth, even those of the United States, which persisted as it's greatest nation.

As they had done in times past some men looked to Asgard for protection when the first aliens came. Beyond their mortal heroes they looked to great Odin father of the Norse Gods and to the mighty Thor strongest of all the gods of Asgard. But the cries of men were not answered. Odin did not appear on his fabled steed Sleipner with his fabled spear

gungir in hand. Nor did the heavens open and the thunder bolts of Thor appear in mankind's defence.

Gaea or Jord, the living human form embodiment of mother Earth suffered enormously. Legend had it that she was mother to Thor himself. But the son did not come to his mother's aid.

No person still living knew why Thor had departed our Earth or Midgard as the Asgardians used to call it. Nor did any existing repository of knowledge contain that information, if any ever did.

Although no man had ever witnessed any activity of the great hammer this is not to say that none took place. In truth there were times when great natural storms occurred in the vicinity of the hammer and they were silenced almost immediately as the hammers head casually absorbed their fearsome energies as if they were but a mild summer breeze. Also on rare occasion vast energies were tapped from the hammer. The energies were hurled skyward before disappearing on route to an unknown destination.

If men had witnessed this they might have thought that Thor himself was drawing on his hammers energies from some vastly distant place. Only Jord herself knew the truth. Now no one lived within hundreds of kilometres of the hammer of Thor anymore and the only inhabitants of the Australian land mass were its original owners.

The earth had now reached it's lowest ebb sink the dark ages and probably even before that ignominious time. There was one benefit. The alien incursions came no more – the Earth was no longer a prize even to those scavengers ranked lowest on the extra-terrestrial scale.

Incredibly there remained a few true believers. Those that believed the son of Odin would one day return and take man back to his former greatness. Some among this dwindling group of persons made ever more infrequent visits to Australia and to the great hammer. Soon now, no one would come again.

The change came slowly, almost imperceptibly, and not with the tumultuous fanfare that might have been expected. Gentle yet eventually soaking rains came to lands that had not seen rain for many, even hundreds of years. Cooler temperatures began to prevail, fearsome alien irradiations abated . Glimpses of hope, all but gone, began to seep back in to the minds of men. .

Alien intruders, scavengers of the lowest order, on one last trip to the Earth turned tail and ran scared out of their evil minds by a power beyond their understanding.

It was supposed to have been the very last pilgrimage to the great hammer, but with things improving all over the Earth the small group resolved to return again. As the group gathered to depart the sky took on an ominous colour and for a moment they scattered to seek some form of shelter from the threatening storm.

But the storm did not eventuate and the darkness fell away to a beautiful blue sky. A great Norse warrior over a thousand feet in height could be seen slowly descending to the Earth. Suddenly the warrior was joined by an ageless human female form and as he reached the ground the two embraced - mother and son - Gaea the Earth mother and Thor Odinson finally returned to the Earth after a very long absence.

Was it too late one might ask? too late for the son of Odin to return to men when so much time had passed and hope had all but gone. The answer to this is simple - and unequivocal - it is never too late, while humankind still draws breath it is never too late.

The rumours of the death of Odin had been true. Even before Thor had departed our mortal realm Odin had been laid to rest, now even his ashes no longer existed. As for Thor he had been engaged in a long and restful sleep but

had been awakened by the great powers of the Universe. The great powers had sought his aid in a struggle that involved the very existence of our Universe.

There had not even been time to retrieve his hammer, though he had drawn on its energies from time to time in a battle that lasted thousands of years. In this battle all of the great powers of the Universe, save Thor himself, had been destroyed. Yet ultimately they had triumphed. Thor, exhausted beyond all belief had again immersed himself in a great sleep of recovery.

No further explanation was given to men, nor was any sought by them.

With the help of the son of Odin and of his mother Gaea but ultimately through the efforts of all men and women, humankind returned to its former greatness and beyond. Thor never left the Earth again at least not while men still lived upon it. He remained the guardian of the Earth until, millennia later, the last man departed Earth for the stars. What Thor did then is another story.

End

The Transcender Threat

Legend has it that from the elevated place of Hlidskialf, within the palace of Valaskjalf, Odin of Asgard can see all that transpires in the nine worlds.

The legend is true, insofar as it goes. In reality looking in one direction Odin can see all of importance that transpires in our entire Multiverse. Looking in another direction he can see into the time stream – back into the past and also into some of the more probable futures.

As Thor approached Odin, the Lord of Asgard was upon Hlidskialf looking forward in the time stream into a very grim yet highly probable future. “Father” said Thor interrupting Odin’s dour thoughts “I have brought them.” Accompanying Thor were no less personages than Captain America, Iron Man, the Silver Surfer, and Dr Stephen Strange himself.

Coming out of his contemplations Odin addressed his visitors “I have requested your presence here in Asgard because of a threat faced by all of the nine worlds.” “Nor do I believe the threat will end if the nine worlds are destroyed.” “The longed feared Asgardian Ragnorak is as nothing compared to this threat” finished Odin. “Look hither” said Odin pointing into the distance “for something of a view of those who would destroy us.”

The perception afforded the four heroes was incomplete as the enemy were among the very few in the Multiverse with the power to partially cloak themselves against Odin’s detections. However it was enough for the assembled heroes, even Stephen Strange and the Silver Surfer, to involuntarily shudder.

“In your vast experience mage or yours Surfer” enquired Odin “have either of you ever encountered the like ?” “Can you add anything to our existing knowledge of them?”

“Never” said Stephen Strange trying hard to contain

another involuntary shudder “never anything like that.” “Nor I” enjoined the Surfer.

“ While Earth has many heroes” continued Odin “you four in particular have a special place in our hearts here in Asgard.” “I ask you to join us here for the coming battle and should you agree I propose augmenting each of your powers in various ways.”

“ Those who seek our destruction have not chosen any name” said Thor “but my father refers to them as the transenders because of their ability to prevail against all they encounter.” “Odin has foreseen that the main attack from the transenders will be here at the very heart of Asgard” continued Thor “with simultaneous subsidiary attacks against the rest of the nine worlds.”

“ What of Earth” asked Captain America “what arrangements will be made for it’s defence?”

“The Earth has many defenders” said Thor “The Grand Vizier, Heimdall and Hogun the Grim are advising them on the nature of the threat.” Almost as an afterthought Thor added “My father will ensure that the ordinary non super powered mortals of Earth will be interdimensionally transported to a safe haven.”

“Ultimately all will depend on the situation here in Asgard ” said Odin “if we fail here then all is lost.”

Without any hesitation all four of the heroes agreed to remain in Asgard, there to confront the principal threat. At that moment Odin gestured and energies arose from the very land of Asgard itself. The energies moved about the Silver Surfer – all around and within him. The Surfer felt elements of the Odinpowers enjoin with his own power cosmic - a sensation he had known once before. He was exultant at his new found power but then humbly accepting of it.

Both Odin and the Surfer knew of the synergistic effect of merging elements of the Odinpowers with the power cosmic. Many millennia ago the great world devourer Galactus and a

more youthful Odin had cooperated to defeat a Universal threat . On the verge of defeat both great entities had joined into a single being and with the benefit of the resultant synergies had turned aside the deadly alien threat. It was something neither Odin nor Galactus ever spoke of again, but the experience was never forgotten.

Odin then bestowed upon Captain America a temporary but most valuable gift. An incredibly light yet superbly strong and durable suit of armour that in no way constrained the Captains freedom of movement. Indeed embedded in the lightweight armour was a small exo-skeleton element that greatly magnified the Captains strength and speed. The armour a combination of Asgardian magic and Brell technology each reinforcing the other was built long ago but had never been used. The good captain's shield, probably proof against any entity below skyfather level was then mystically enhanced by the Lord of Asgard.

Iron Man was provided with one of only three Odin gems known to exist. This near inexhaustible power source was mystically implanted as an inseparable element of his armour, vastly increasing iron mans strength, durability and raw power.

Last but certainly not least Odin took Dr Strange aside escorting him into a most sacred place located to the side of Hlidskialf, a most inner sanctuary, the throne room within a throne room - only ever seen by a very few of the most faithful.

I am not privy to what transpired in that place suffice to say that Earth's sorcerer supreme emerged with a second amulet upon his person. An artefact older than any other in all Asgardian cosmology and that had not seen the light of day since Odin himself was a youth playing with his brothers Ve and Vili under the watchful eyes of Bestla and Borr.

Elsewhere in other areas of the nine worlds preparations for the onslaught continued. Hela readied her legions of the

dead for the defence of Hel. The rumbling voice of the elemental Surtur could be heard throughout the nine worlds as he reforged his great sword twilight making it even more powerful and made his followers/legions ready.

At the edge of Valhalla the souls of the fallen warriors, the Einheriar, readied for a battle greater even than the Asgardian Ragnorak.

The life forces of almost all of Asgard save Odin, Thor, Loki and a few trusted others entered and powered up the huge armoured Asgardian Destroyer construct to which Odin entrusted that most magnificent weapon the newly reforged OdinSword. Odin himself grew to the 1,000 feet height of Surtur at the same time teleporting unto himself his great spear Gungir and the seldom used yet magnificent shield of Odin both proportionally increased in size to reflect his own enhanced stature.

In perhaps the strangest twist of all the seer Oracle, released from the Troll King Geirridour's flaming mystical prison, joined as a single entity with Mimir. That combined entity moved to the side of great Odin there best to advise him on the coming battle.

The Mighty Thor dressed in his battle armour, fabled belt of strength and magnificent gauntlets. Thor raised his hammer mjolnor high and watched as energies arose from the very soil of Asgard and entered the head of the hammer.

As Odin had foreseen the Transcender attack was launched simultaneously against all of the nine worlds. Also as predicted the attack was strongest against Asgard itself. Very little was known of the entities Odin had named the Transcenders. They were understood to be capable of matter/energy manipulation on a cosmic scale and were versed in reality manipulation. Rather than overwhelm a foe by superior force it was their way to find their adversaries greatest weakness and defeat him with the minimum effort possible. Also they sometimes fought using "proxies"

created specifically for the purpose. Of their true nature and numbers nothing was known.

This Transcender attack commenced by proxy. Countless numbers of larger than human size obsidian shapeshifters appeared above all the nine worlds and descended upon them. The creatures were strong, highly durable and capable of energy projection. Their vast numbers alone posed a threat.

In the skies above Asgard the disintegration beam of the Destroyer construct was joined by the power of Odin directed through Gungir, by bolts of anti-force from Thor, immensely powerful bolts of cosmic/OdinPower energy from the Silver Surfer, and Iron Man's much enhanced repulsor rays.

A not inconsiderable mystical defence was mounted by Dr Strange, Thor's mischievous half brother Loki and Queen Karnilla acting in unison.

The skies above Asgard turned first blinding white from the energy defence and then very dark as the Transcender proxies were melted and vaporised.

However the proxies seemed to come from an endless source and were soon on the surface of Asgard and in close quarter combat. It was in this part of the battle with his most formidable exo-skeleton light armour that Captain America came into his own. Skilfully using his shield with its fresh Odin enchantments he slay huge numbers of the proxies. The fallen warriors of Valhalla the Einheriar also showed their mettle in this close quarter combat.

As the close quarter combat continued the Oracle/Mimir amalgam cried out "be careful Odin we sense there may be actual Transcenders among the proxies."

Indeed a few instants later a proxy near Odin grew to Odin's 1,000 feet height and seized the Lord of Asgard's wrists firmly. The entity was too powerful to be a proxy. For a moment the Transcender occupied Odin's undivided attention as both entities locked together, Odin in full battle

armour, coruscating with energies through the length and breadth of their huge frames.

“ How to determine which are proxies and which are actual Transcenders ?” mused Odin. Even as he fought the Transcender Odin interdimensionally teleported all proxies in the vicinity of Asgard to a pocket dimension limbo prison he had created some time ago. Including the entity Odin was engaging - three entities remained - all were shown up as Transcenders - as unlike the proxies they had the power to resist interdimensional teleportation.

The other two Transcenders converged on Odin but the first was given pause by the attentions of the Asgardian Destroyer and the second by a massive combined attack from Thor, the Silver Surfer, Iron Man, and Captain America. The three Transcenders then gave up all pretence of corporeal form and returned to what was presumably their normal state of beings of pure energy.

Then in a brief break in hostilities the air was filled with the dying screams of thousands of Asgardians. In that dreadful moment Odin and Thor realised that the Transcenders had detected the physical bodies of the Asgardians whose souls powered the Destroyer construct and (protected though they were) had slain them. The Destroyer crashed to the floor and the OdinSword fell from its grasp clattering to the ground.

Using considerable godly power Odin almost instantly brought the Asgardians back to life. Such was Odin's use of power that he momentarily drew on the ancient amulet he had given to Dr Strange and elements of the OdinPower bequeathed to the Silver Surfer. .

The three energy form Transcenders looked on - Odin's act was alien to them - what is dead should remain dead. For all their alienness they also knew full well that the act of creation was a far greater one than the act of destruction. Momentarily there emanated from them something that might have passed for grudging respect. Was it possible that

they, like so many before them, had underestimated the power of Asgard ? On that note the Transcenders and their proxies that were still engaged elsewhere in the nine worlds departed the field of battle.

In this first stage of the attack suffice it to say that others of the nine worlds did not fare quite so well as the more heavily defended Asgard. Still all, including Midgard and its heroes had held firm.

In the temporary respite that was afforded, the Destroyer construct was re-animated again by the life forces of most Asgardians.

The second stage of the Transcender attack was an all out energy attack on all of the nine worlds but again with the focus on Asgard. At first the source of the Transcender attack could not be pinpointed. While it may have been extra dimensional – they were clearly drawing on energies from different parts of our own Universe as evidenced by the greatly accelerated death of a number of stars. To what extent the Transcenders actually needed these additional energies was unclear.

Under this massive energy assault Hela's domain of the dead was the first to fall. It may be thought that killing those that are already dead does not seem to matter. However the disintegration of Hela, her realm and every last one of her followers into sub-atomic fragments that were then cast beyond retrieval amongst the solar winds effectively meant that she would play no further part in events.

Ymir and the other frost giants quickly followed – their greatest weakness was easily exploited as the Transcenders subjected them to a level of heat greater than ever found in even the hottest star. Mighty Surtur and his realm of Muspelheim also fell as the Transcenders again exploited that realm's great weakness. Earth physicists say that there is no temperature lower than the minus 273 degrees Kelvin of absolute zero. Such laws of physics do not apply to the Transcenders who froze great Surtur and indeed all of

Muspelheim at a temperature that men cannot measure but was assuredly far below absolute zero.

Asgard protected by the shield of Odin now grown to City size fought on, as Dr Strange and Loki both in astral form finally succeeded in locating the source of the Transcender attack.

With all of the considerable force available to them the bulk of the Asgard force teleported close to the source of the Transcenders and launched an all out attack. The Transcender base of operation, if such it can be called, was swamped by a combined Odin/Thor godblast, and the Destroyers disintegration beam and molecular disruptors. The Silver Surfer added his own might utilising to the fullest extent the synergistic effects of combining his power cosmic and elements of the OdinPower. The formidably enhanced Iron Man also added his not inconsiderable capabilities. Eventually the Transcender attack was silenced and the Odin/Thor/Destroyer/Surfer/Iron Man attack ran its course. The weary combatants returned to Asgard and made for Hlidskialf.

Odin returned to normal size and threw off his badly damaged battle armour. The armour literally disintegrated as it hit the ground, a most depressing site. The armour of Thor had been literally stripped and fried from him, his vaunted gauntlets damaged and cracks even appeared in great mjolnor. The Silver Surfer though seemingly uninjured was on the verge of exhaustion. Iron Man noted ruefully that his armour had been all but destroyed and that the Odin Gem that had been mystically implanted in his armour was now drained of all power.

Asgard itself had not fared well – though the City proper had been largely protected, continental Asgard was little more than a cinder.

At the high place of Hlidskialf, Odin was flanked by the Oracle/Mimir amalgam on one side and Dr Strange and Thor

on the other. The battle weary monarch looked out from Hlidskialf and derived no comfort from what he saw. Of the nine worlds only Midgard and Asgard itself remained undefeated and already the Transcenders were looking elsewhere for conquest. An increasing number of stars were falling dark as the already too powerful Transcenders drew even more power from them.

Midgard, despite the best efforts of its heroes, and even with the intervention of certain elder gods, teetered on the edge of defeat. However Odin took comfort that the bulk of humanity was still safely ensconced in the remote dimension to which he had interdimensionally teleported them.

The group gathering about Odin at Hlidskialf appeared mightily weary and disheartened. Of them all Captain America seemed strangely the least weary, his light armour almost undamaged. He was not seen as a major target by the Transcenders but the condition of his armour may also have been testament to the Brell technology which helped create it.

Odin briefly looked into the time stream at one probable future and was confused by what he saw. There seemed to be aspects of the time stream past and future coming together in the now moment. "There is definitely a local disturbance in the space time-continuum" remarked Dr Strange. "I sense it too" enjoined the Surfer.

At that moment Oracle/Mimir cried out " The Transcenders come again, this time to finish us."

"We are not quite ready for them my son" said Odin wearily "if you could but buy us some time ?" With that Thor raised mjolnor high and in a completely unrestrained way summoned the elements impeaching them to do his will. Both cosmic and more earthly winds, rains, storms and lightning of indescribable destructive power seemed to reinforce one another as Thor brought forth elemental forces

not just from Asgard but surrounding dimensions and even, seemingly, from time itself.

Never was there such a storm as this – no planet or planetary system had ever witnessed the like – and all was directed at the implacable Transcenders. And for a time at the storm's height even these obdurate beings were held at bay. But the storm could not be maintained forever and as its intensity dropped somewhat five Transcenders appeared in the still storm laden skies above Asgard.

Odin took one final fleeting look from Hlidskialf and thought he saw Vili and Ve approaching from the past and Magni the son of Thor approaching from a possible future. He looked to Oracle/Mimir for explanation but before that amalgam could speak the Transcenders struck.

The Transcenders struck at the Asgard Destroyer not merely melting it but vaporising it. Moments thereafter they gathered the OdinSword briefly examining it before teleporting it to an unknown destination.

As the life forces of thousands of Asgardians were released Odin directed them to their physical bodies. He then invoked an Asgardian spell never before used and the thousands of Asgardian bodies merged into a single large physical entity of immense size. The All Asgard entity picked up a nearby Transcender and hurled it far from Asgard only to lose a hand in the process. Such was the nature of the Transcenders that the All Asgard entity was unable to regenerate the lost hand.

Still the Transcenders pressed the attack and Odin again grew again to Surtur level size. In still another strange twist of fate Odin teleported unto himself Twilight the sword of Surtur. Instants before his realm had been frozen Surtur had thrown the sword from Muspelheim to Asgard for Odin's safekeeping. It certainly looked more than strange the Allfather now aggressively wielding this great weapon of what was once one of his greatest enemies.

The Silver Surfer, immensely powerful though he now was, was struck in flight by energy thrusts from two Transcenders acting simultaneously. He plummeted to the soil of Asgard stunned but still very much alive . Meanwhile the trio of Dr Strange, Loki and Karnilla just barely escaped instant vaporisation by the erection of a mystic force barrier that required their full combined power.

Under this final attack the Odin Shield itself still protecting Asgard high above the City gave way, overheated and overloaded it shattered into countless minor pieces. With his energies depleted Odin was unable to reform it. As Odin then struck with Twilight, one of the Transcenders struck at Oracle/Mimir with energy bolts from its eyes separating the amalgam into its components and then crushing the less mobile Mimir underfoot.

Against all odds and all reasonable expectations Midgard and its heroes still held on by a thumb nail against the Transcenders.

Using Twilight a beleaguered Odin had absorbed and contained within the sword part of the energy form of one of the Transcenders. As Odin braced himself in this grim confrontation Oracle cried out “look Odin, look the past and future heroes of Asgard and Midgard are converging on this now moment.”

There could be no mistaking it, heroes, villains and others of Asgard’s and Midgard’s past and some more probable futures were converging on both Asgard and Midgard.

The legions of the past and of the future were too numerous to name here – long forgotten ancients joined with those yet to be born the whole unstoppable tide converging on the Transcenders.

The Transcenders could perhaps have escaped their fate merely by leaving the vicinities of Asgard and Midgard. Instead more Transcenders were drawn in against the unstoppable force. They might as well have been children trying to stop the waves crashing against the shore.

Thus the Transcender threat, the greatest ever faced by Midgard or Asgard, ended .

The final blow was struck by an entity as ancient as it was powerful - the Demi-Urge -acting in concert with Odin's brothers Vili and Ve. This ancient entity which had once given life to our world now struck the death blow of the Transcenders.

Afterwards the legions returned whence they came to the distant past and in some cases to a future which may never be.

End

The Asgard Anomaly

The distant future

As with all star ships of the Leandarr class, the superlative flagship carried a complement of mystic entities.

Experience over long millennia had taught the Narssons that a blend of the most advanced technology married with the most powerful mystic entities was a good insurance policy. Against pretty much anyone.

On this occasion, with the Emperor designate, Zdahlin Tihler, on board, the complement of mystics had been doubled. No chances were being taken with the soon to be most powerful entity in our Universe. A mystic himself.

This made it all the more surprising when, without warning, the great vessel fell out of hyperspace while, oblivious, its escorting starships continued their hyperspace journey.

"This shouldn't happen," said the flagships Commander "there is no precedent in our history."

"It has happened," responded the flagship's Captain, "live with it." Telepathically he indicated for his subordinate to calm down.

Immediately and without instruction the starships biological computers announced their present location. The vessels machine computers confirmed this a few seconds later.

This area of normal space was known to the Narssons. It had been known to them for thousands of their years. They never came here and if the Narssons weren't game to come here neither was anyone else.

The bridge crew took in the immediate navigational projection directly above them. A scaled down three dimensional actual image of the area of normal space commencing half a light year from them.

An area of space larger than any known star system that was subject to permanent roiling cosmic super storms.

A place that had only ever been known as the Asgard Anomaly. For reasons now largely lost in the obscurity of

time.

Narsson technology was good – the three dimensional image mapped the area of space showing apparently moving pockets of calm amidst the inconceivable fury of the storms.

At that moment the Emperor designate supported by his prime mystic and seer teleported on to the bridge.

“Arcane forces pulled us from hyperspace,” said the prime mystic both verbally and telepathically in a manner that got everyone’s attention. Even those crew members not on the bridge “Just a momentary application, but enough,” he finished.

Then the great man himself spoke up. Zdahlin Tihler, soon to be Emperor of many thousands of star systems. “The cosmic storms are enhanced by mystic forces” he announced to no one in particular, and everyone in general. There was a moment of verbal silence. Everyone on the bridge looked up at the three dimensional actual scale image of the Asgard anomaly. Some in fear, some in awe, others in a more calculating manner.

“What I couldn’t do with such additional power at my disposal,” thought Zdahlin Tihler a thought that he couldn’t quite keep from the more receptive the minds on the flagships bridge.

“We are being pulled toward the anomaly,” announced the flagship Captain, somehow ahead of even the biological computer, “Sire – your mystic defenders may be required to augment the flagships reverse thrust.”

“Stay those actions good Captain,” came a voice that was now never challenged, a voice of absolute authority. “This may be no bad thing,” continued the voice, and our escorting fleet should be rejoining us, almost any moment now?” Zdahlin Tihler’s face took on the cruel smile that the flagship captain knew only too well.

Up ahead, at the edge of the Asgard anomaly, a lone humanoid type figure appeared. The ships computers

projected and enhanced the image.

It was not a holographic projection nor, as the prime mystic confirmed, was it merely an astral projection.

"What is that entity?" asked Zdahlin Tihler with perhaps just a slight tremor in his voice that would have been more evident had he chosen telepathic communication.

The ship's biological computers did not respond immediately and the machine computers did not respond at all.

The biological computers were quite old. Which was a good thing. Biological computers are always evolving, adapting and changing and, with some ultimate limitations, improve over time.

Finally the biological computers responded:

"It is an entity, Excellency, thought to have existed in a time before the Universe was destroyed." "A survivor, somehow, of that destruction." "A god, no less, a true god, from the race that this anomaly is named after."

"Magni, Thorson, of Asgard."

The entire bridge of the flagship stood transfixed as the entity, Magni Thorson, drew the great ship closer to the anomaly. It or he seemed to be assisted by something held in both hands and raised high.

"What is that contrivance, that artifact that it holds" asked The biological computers took even longer to respond.

"Excellency, it is a weapon from the time before the destruction of the Universe."

"A weapon once wielded by the entities father, the greatest weapon of that time before time."

"The mighty Mjolnir, the hammer of Thor of Asgard, son of he who was once known as Odin the Almighty."

"Begin reverse thrust Captain" came the voice of ultimate authority, Zdahlin Tihler, as a micro second later his telepathic communication washed over the great starship "all mystics to my side!"

The flagship captain and prime mystic looked at each other.

There was a slight tremor in their masters voice and telepathic communication that neither of them had ever heard before.

The great starship, flagship of all the Narsson star fleets, strained to its limits. Shuddering, almost convulsing, the full length of its leviathan frame in a losing tug of war with Asgard's strongest god.

Zdahlin Tihler, Emperor designate, moved quickly. Together with his prime mystic he entered a transitory mind fusion with the ships biological computers. An attempt to grasp in scant seconds all there was to be known about the Asgard anomaly. It was precious little.

Then as the flagship, victim in an unequal contest, started accelerating towards Magni and the Asgard anomaly, it began firing on the Thorson at the same time as Zdahlin Tihler directed a mystic assault on the god.

Eerie blue white discs of mystically enhanced plasma raced across the decreasing distance to Magni. These were followed by faster than light slivers of anti-energy and then near light speed anti-matter torpedoes.

All of them, individually, energies that could strip a world to its core. Indeed in times past the flagship had done exactly that and worse.

Swinging mighty Mjolnir the Thorson created a personal force shield and deflection screen much as his father might of in a different time and place. The energies directed against him, vast though they were, were deflected off into the outer edge of the Asgard anomaly and were consumed in the constantly roiling cosmic storms.

Waiting until they were close enough the Narsson flagship saved its best till last, in the form of a hitherto experimental weapon. A living weapon, the anti-god wave.

The anti-god wave energies were not fully deflected by Magni but danced and crackled across his force field and deflection screen. Seeking a crack or crevice through which

they could feast on the god within and what a feast that would be.

Clasping the hammer supreme in both hands Magni allowed just a portion of his life essence to be as one with the hammer. As the resultant energies were released the anti-god wave fed upon them. Yet at the same time it was physically thrust into the nearby abyss of the Asgard anomaly.

Magni watched on, with not a little satisfaction, as the living weapon, the anti-god wave drowned in the overwhelming god power driven sea of cosmic storms that was the Asgard anomaly. Just too much god power for it to absorb.

At this point it was as much as Magni could do not to vaporize the flagship before him, yet that was not his purpose.

With the anti-god wave spent the flagship meek and now unresisting moved to within a kilometer of Magni, less than a tenth of its own length.

Magni allowed Mjolnir to rotate inside his grip and as it did so, Asgardian energies bathed and enveloped the Narsson flagship. Suddenly the great vessel was stripped of its numerous layers of force shields and seemingly even of its composite hull as all within was laid bare to Magni's gaze. He saw his quarry.

The Thorson could not, did not, expect that the Emperor designate would surrender himself to save the flagship. Such an individual would gladly sacrifice every last starship of Empire if it would save his own personal hide.

"I have what I came for" said the Thorson as he conducted Zdahlin Tihler and his prime mystic away. "I have no claim on anyone or anything else present, you may leave this area." It is said that sound does not travel in space as there are no molecules to conduct it, yet the voice of great Magni reverberated with crystal clarity throughout the ship and all of nearby space.

Yet the son of Thor the Mighty knew that the Narsson flagship would not leave the vicinity. The aliens could hardly return to the home worlds after “losing” the emperor designate. Better for them to die here.

Magni knew the flagships escorts would be here soon and then more, many more, starships would come. Perhaps eventually all of the star fleets of the Narsson. Starships beyond counting.

Let them come thought Magni, itching for a fight; *it's been eternity since we've had a decent fight around here.*

Magni raised mighty Mjolnir high again and the closest of the fearsome cosmic storms that enveloping all of the Asgard anomaly parted. Without ceremony Magni escorted the Emperor designate and prime mystic inside the anomaly. The fearsome storms reforming after them as they passed through to an area of tranquility within.

As they moved deeper in the quiet zone within the anomaly they come upon a great city.

True there were much larger cities in the Narsson Empire and with much taller buildings. Still there was something about this place, this truly golden realm, a grandeur, a majesty, a character, a sense of history that made it a greater place than any city of any empire anywhere.

Zdahlin knew it had to be Asgard City.

With all three of them levitating above the magnificent city Magni escorted his charges to the high place of Hlidskalf.

“This is my father” he said simply, though there was great pride in his voice. He might have said “this is my father the lord of all Asgard, and the greatest warrior god that ever drew breath” but such was not the way of Magni. Why wax lyrical when a few words would suffice?

Even to the man mountain that was Zdahlin Tihler, Thor was imposing. Older, heavier than when mortal man knew him. Yet his body was not old. His white hair though, testament that even now the Asgardians were not true immortals.

Something the son of Odin could have changed but had chose not to and with good reason.

Thor motioned Zdahlin and his sycophant to sit before him and a small assemblage of gods whom Magni joined. The other gods meant nothing to the dictator though he took stock of them.

There was a god who seemed almost to glow with light and reek of inner nobility, a goddess with a beauty that would forever evade any mortal women or even younger goddess, and one other, a god, unsmiling, grim faced with an unyielding hardness. Zdahlin looked into those eyes, and then looked away.

Thor took stock of his “visitors”

The son of Odin had known evil intimately; human evil, the evil of gods, of cosmic and abstract entities and evil at the highest possible level. Yet before him now stood another kind of evil. In some respects worse than anything Thor had heretofore encountered.

“We of Asgard do not usually interfere in the affairs of this Universe” boomed Thor “yet in your case we have made an exception.”

The Odinson waived slightly and a huge visual image appeared before the assemblage, of a large blue green inhabited world. Thor motioned again. It was the same world after de-terraforming, brown, arid, no oceans and lifeless.

“Do you recognize this world?” he asked of Zdahlin.

The questioning continued. Images of suns forced to go nova, inhabited worlds stripped to their molten cores for mining purposes, worlds vaporized by planet busting super weapons.

Zdahlin Tihler humored his inquisitors. Oddly the purpose of the assemblage did not immediately occur to either him or his prime mystic.

It couldn't be could it?

It was simply inconceivable.

That the Emperor designate of the most powerful empire in existence was on trial for his life.

Finally the mighty Thor finished detailing the catalogue of crimes and there was silence.

A time for all present to ponder on the enormity of what had been presented.

Then the Lord of Asgard rose and walked a little away from the assemblage hands behind his back.

He addressed the Emperor designate. "In this place, Hlidskalf I can see all things that transpire, that have transpired, and that will transpire." Thor continued "I have seen the alternate futures for you Zdahlin Tihler and your prime mystic and not a one of them provide any grounds for your redemption."

Then as Thor motioned, Magni arose and pronounced judgment.

Zdahlin Tihler and his prime mystic found themselves in another place. A totally unfamiliar place. One for which, even with their combined mystic skills, they could find no frame of reference. Yet both knew it was not some form of after life.

All about them was destruction at a level far beyond anything they themselves had caused. A confrontation between great powers of the first order was in progress. Somehow their sensory capabilities had been enhanced to the point that they were aware of all the conflict about them for a radius of many, many light years. So they could sense acutely and at first hand all of the death, all of the

destruction, all of the pain, all of the agony, all of the bitterness, all of the hopelessness, all of the sense of betrayal. It was all but overwhelming and getting worse with each moment.

At the edge of their physical sight a small planetoid or detached continental mass seemed to be the main focus of the conflict. Resisting an attack totally out of all proportion to its size.

The Emperor designate and the mystic focused on this.

Moving physically closer to the battle.

Though they still did not know it the dictator and his mystic were witnessing the final stages of a Universe wide confrontation between an alliance of gods and magical/mystic powers on one hand and an alliance of cosmic entities and abstract powers on the other.

They did not recognize any of the warring factions, including the monstrous humanoid shape corpses still spewing the last residual energies from their armored forms, nor the partially armored titan with the winged helmet and the small human size silver form near it.

Until they recognized the drifting continental mass and three human shape forms fighting side by side above it.

Younger versions of Magni and Thor and what could only have been he whom Thor himself had referred to during the trial as the Allfather.

“Somehow Thor and Magni have sent us back in time, Lord” said the prime mystic “to that time of the end of their Universe.”

Then an entity brushed past them moving toward the continental mass, they did not know the entity, could not know it. Yet as mystic powers they saw it for what it was. The embodiment in a single living entity of this entire Universe.

From out of Asgard, he who was the Allfather, now mystically vastly increased in size, came forth to engage the

entity. Zdahlin thought he heard the Allfather call to the entity that it was not too late using the name Eternity. Then Zdahlin Tihler screamed and kept on screaming as the two titans clashed and the Universe about them and the entities themselves died.

Yet as his master screamed amidst the total and absolute carnage the prime mystic looked on through the destruction and saw Asgard partially intact. Something reforming from the Odin/Eternity clash moving to protect Asgard, even against the destruction of a Universe.

Magni escorted Zdahlin Tihler and the mystic back outside of the Asgard anomaly. The mighty Thor accompanied them. Both Asgardians were dressed in full battle armor. As Magni carried Mjolnir so Thor held the OdinAxe.

The Narsson flagship was no longer alone. Its escorts had arrived and many other starships with them. Yet more were arriving every few moments.

An attack had begun on the Asgard anomaly with the Narsson fleet using others of the same living anti-god weapon that Magni had been exposed to. The level of the attack could only increase over time as more starships arrived.

Thor the mighty raised the OdinAxe as Magni raised the hammer supreme. Energies flowed from god to god, from hammer to axe then were unleashed.

Not to destroy the star fleet but simply to gain their attention. A kind of massive electromagnetic pulse yet on all levels: human sensory, electronic, mystical, and many other levels. Bringing all activity of the starfleet to a grinding halt. It served two purposes, an unmistakable demonstration of power but also, as the Narsson starfleet recovered, it most certainly got their undivided attention.

In time a large shuttle craft approached Thor and Magni from the Narsson flagship and took the Emperor designate and prime mystic aboard.

"What will they do father, when they discover the truth?" asked Magni

"That they have both been driven utterly and irretrievably mad?" responded Thor. "Even where it is physically possible, as when the Odinpower saved us, there are few minds that can survive the destruction of a Universe." "Zdahlin Tihler's and his prime mystic's minds are not among them."

"In this nexus point some call the Asgard anomaly and that is the link between the two Universes we were able to send Zdahlin Tihler and his sycophant back in time." "Their punishment is complete."

Magni realized that Thor had not answered his question yet as father and son watched on and the huge starfleet began to depart, the Thorson saw that the question had been answered.

"I think the mystic realized just before his mind was destroyed" said Magni.

Thor looked at his son.

"That Asgard can never die!" responded Magni.

"It is why I have kept us as less than true immortals" responded Thor "That we may all the more appreciate that Asgard is truly the realm eternal!"

End